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Though designed as a textbook this work is a comprehensive and able study of the progress of Israel's religious life and thought as influenced by her great men. Selections from the Bible give the life and teachings of each prophet, and notes and a running commentary make the historical setting clear. The illustrations include Sargent's Frieze of the Prophets, and many photographs of modern scenes in the Holy Land and bas-reliefs from ancient monuments, maps and table of important events, B. C. 586-330. A. L. A. booklist v. 8, 1911-12:55

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EDITED BY

ERNEST D. BURTON

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THE HEBREW PROPHETS

OR

PATRIOTS AND LEADERS OF ISRAEL

A TEXTBOOK FOR STUDENTS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL AGE AND ABOVE

By

GEORGIA LOUISE CHAMBERLIN

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This volume belongs to a series of textbooks for religious education intended to cover the period from early childhood to mature life. A list of these books will be found at the close of the volume. The present book is adapted to use in the later years of the academy or high school, or in the earlier years of a college course.

The student has already pursued the consecutive study of the lives of the Old Testament heroes and of Jesus and Paul. He is now ready to turn to the study of the development of the religious life and thought of the Hebrew people through their great men. In taking up the present book the pupil should not therefore feel that because he has already made a study of portions of the Old Testament, he is now duplicating the work of earlier years. While a few of the characters whose lives are treated in this volume have become known to him in his previous study, the whole subject is here presented from a different point of view and with greatly multiplied selections for reading. There is, therefore, no danger of lack of fresh interest in the subject. The student is urged to attack the study of this volume with the same earnestness and to apply to it the same interesting methods which he has found successful in his study of other history and literature.

It is believed that many older people will find in this book a helpful medium of study, since in small compass, without reference to other volumes, it gives through selected literature a rapid survey of the growth of the religion of the Hebrews such as cannot easily be obtained elsewhere.

Both editor and author desire to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Professor John M. P. Smith, in the criticism of the work from the point of view of modern historical scholarship. Only on a basis of thorough scholarship can the work of religious education be effectually done for pupils who in other fields of study are taught to search for facts and to accept the results of investigation.

The editor and the author count themselves, therefore, peculiarly fortunate in having secured the benefit of Dr. Smith's scholarly judgment.

For permission to use translations from the American Standard Revised Version of the Bible, thanks are due the publishers, Messrs. Thomas Nelson & Sons. In many cases, however, the translation has been further revised with a view to making the selection more clear and comprehensible to students of immature years.

April, 1911

FOREWORD TO THE STUDENT

Many years ago the author of this volume, then about sixteen years of age, came into touch with a great teacher. Up to that period the books bearing the names of the Hebrew prophets were to her both unexplored and unintelligible. In a few brief class periods at a summer school, through the wonderful presentations of this teacher, the Hebrew prophets became living men with living messages to the world. Since that time, no year has passed in which these men have not become more real, and their influence on human life more clearly seen and appreciated. It is in the hope that this experience may, in some measure, come to the boys and girls who study these pages, that this book has been prepared.

In entering upon the study of the chapters contained in this book, the reader will meet a task which, while containing many possibilities for literary enjoyment, will need the same painstaking care which he devotes to the study of Greek, Roman, or other ancient history and literature. It has been too long the custom to relegate the study of the history and literature of the Hebrews to a half-hour on Sunday in connection with the Sunday school. Such an expenditure of time is better than giving no attention to the subject, but it is hoped that all who use this book will find it possible to devote a fair amount of time to the consideration of its pages, whether the work be performed on Sunday or a week-day, in a school for religious instruction alone, or in connection with the general education of the day school. We have only to remind ourselves of the far-reaching influence of the literature of the Hebrews upon the civic, social, and religious life of the world to convince ourselves of its importance as a subject of study.

We must bear in mind that in the collection of literature from which selections are presented in this volume there are many ideas as well as frequent words and phrases which can be understood only in the light of the history out of which the literature arose.

An effort has been made, therefore, to give a sufficient historical setting to each selection. Because of the limitations of space required in a practical textbook it has been impossible to make this historical setting as complete as might be desired. This is especially true in the latter part of the book. The period of Israel's history following the restoration of Jerusalem was replete with interesting historical events. The influence and activity of the prophets in this period, however, was less than in the earlier history of the nation, and for this reason, as well as because of limitations of space, it has been necessary to omit, to a very large degree, the history of the later period. That the religious life of the people in these years was steadily growing will be seen by the study of the small number of selections from the literature which are incorporated.

Many students will desire to read more fully concerning the history of the Hebrews, especially in its relation to the work of the prophets. For such study we recommend constant reference to such a dictionary as Hastings' one-volume *Dictionary of the Bible*[1] or the *Standard Bible Dictionary*[2] which present brief articles of value on practically every subject which will occur to the mind of the reader. A very practical and complete one-volume history of the Hebrews is Wade's *Old Testament History*.[3] A most attractive volume, giving a chapter to each of the Hebrew prophets, is Cornill's *The Prophets of Israel*.[4] A general book on the Old Testament prophet is Batten's *The Hebrew Prophet*.[5] Excellent commentaries on the prophets are found in the series, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*,[6] *The Bible for Home and School*,[7] and *The Century Bible*.[8]

Only by constant use of the numerous maps, which have been most carefully prepared with reference to the history which they illustrate, and by frequent review of the summaries of historical events, appearing for the early period in chap. viii, and for the later period in two historical tables on pp. 101 and 169, can the history be kept clearly in mind. These maps and tables may also profitably

[1] Charles Scribner's Sons, $5.00.
[2] Funk & Wagnalls, $6.00.
[3] E. P. Dutton & Co., $1.00.
[4] Open Court Publishing Co., $1.00.
[5] Macmillan, $1.50.
[6] G. P. Putnam's Sons.
[7] Macmillan.
[8] T. C. & E. C. Jack, Edinburgh.

be compared with those contained in other ancient histories in order that the reality of the Old Testament history and its relation to the ancient world may more fully be appreciated. It should be remembered that the amount of territory possessed by the Hebrews was exceedingly small and that its importance to other nations lay entirely in its geographical situation, and since the period of its independence was short it receives scant mention in the general histories of ancient peoples. Its great importance to us lies not in its political importance at any time, but in the influence which its great thinkers have exerted upon the world.

The illustrations have been chosen chiefly with reference to their value in assisting the student to an understanding of the subject. The views of places are of course modern. Those of ancient buildings and customs are taken from walls and inscriptions. While the frontispiece will make the largest aesthetic contribution, it will also illustrate the character of each prophet as conceived by one of the great artists of modern times. The original of this picture as frescoed upon the walls of the Public Library in Boston, Mass., furnishes a most imposing procession of color and majestic character.

Although it is the purpose of this book to give to the student a fair conception of the work of the Hebrew prophets and their messages to their own times and people, its full work will not have been accomplished unless it assists the student to make a connection between the problems of the prophet and those of his own day. The messages of the prophets were essentially ethical and religious, and the principles which they proclaimed were the universal principles of justice, mercy, and truth, which are as greatly needed in the world today as in Palestine centuries ago. The supreme legacy of the prophet—the conception of one universal God whose character is perfect in power, in truth, and in justice, whose attitude toward mankind is that of a loving father—has certainly a great bearing upon the problems of modern life, both individual and national. The sense of the brotherhood of man, which is the corollary of this principle, did not come to maturity in the times covered by our study, but it can be understood and appreciated most fully when approached through the long period of its early development.

Under each chapter the student's attention is directed to one or more special conditions in modern life which the application of the principles of the prophet under consideration might affect. It is hoped that many other circumstances and problems of personal and of national importance may be approached in the same way.

G. L. C.

April 20, 1911

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Land and the Literature of the Hebrews.—At the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea lies the land of Palestine, not larger than the state of Vermont, but so situated between the great nations of the ancient world as to present an obstacle to the free passage of men and arms in time of war, and of commerce in seasons of peace. Now the possession of the Turk, its people poverty-stricken and illiterate, remnants of a drifting tide from the desert, or swarthy Jew content with the humblest home, provided it be in his own land, it contains little to remind the traveler of the glories of an ancient nation whose influence has reached to the ends of the earth.

It is not because of its strange and tragic political history that this nation has commanded the attention of the world, but because in it was planted centuries before Christ a religion one product of which was Christianity, and another modern Judaism, which still finds its adherents in millions of members of the Hebrew race scattered over the habitable globe.

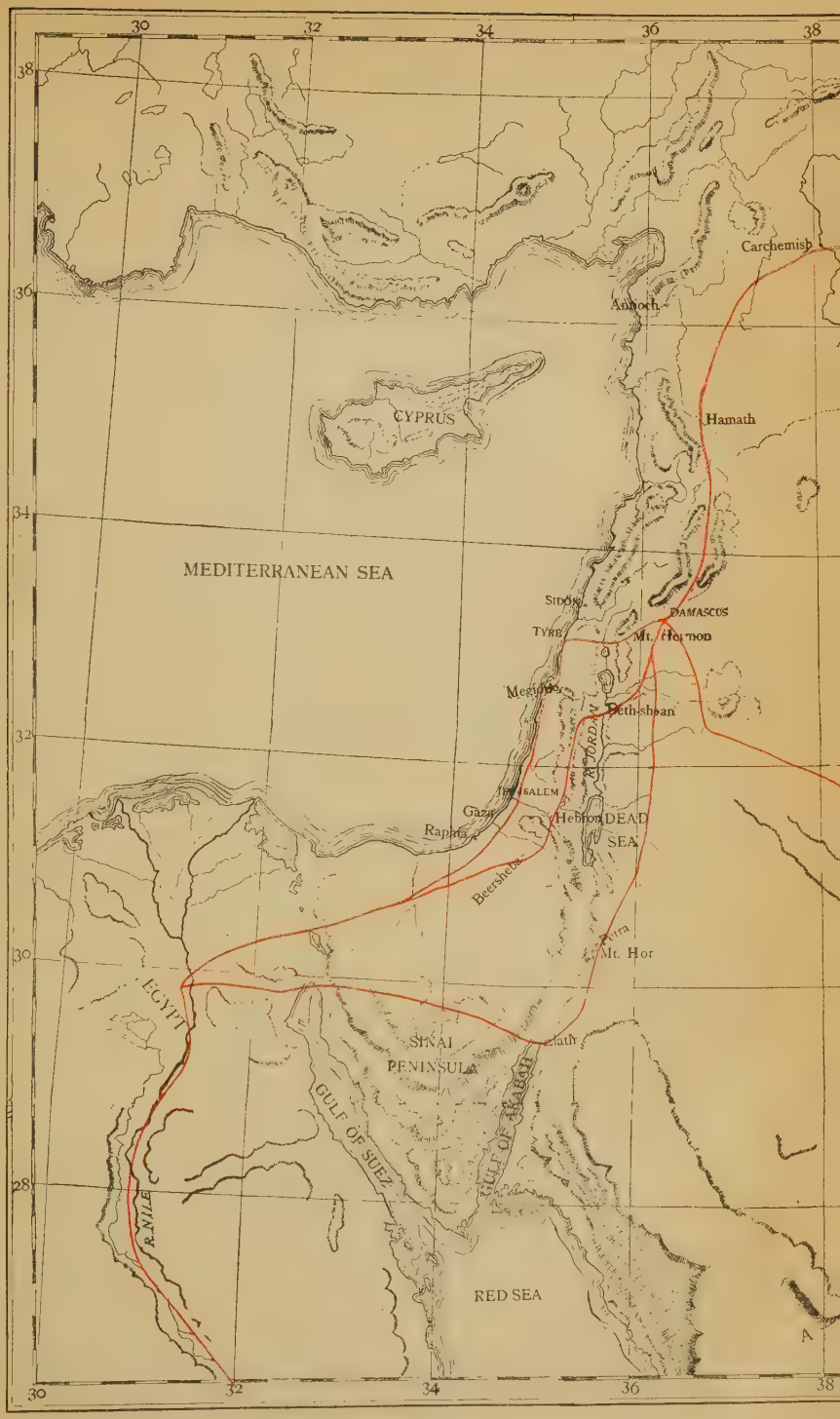
The mother religion from which Christianity grew must be of supreme interest to all who live in a Christian land. The modern rise of interest in the Orient leads us still more thoughtfully to consider that to an oriental nation came the revelation of God in its highest perfection, and to the Hebrew prophet, priest, and sage we owe the literature which preserves the clearest messages of God to humanity that have come down to us from the past.

In the Old Testament is traced through more than a thousand years the growth of the religion of the Hebrews. This record is not a definite chronological presentation of historical facts. It is a collection of such literature of the Hebrews as has survived the political and social disasters of a people bereft of their land, and driven to the ends of the earth by wars of conquest and by persecution. These records as found in the Old Testament are incomplete and fragmentary, but notwithstanding their deficiencies as historical

material they present to us a brilliant and impressive series of pictures of life and thought in that ancient nation. There are breaks in the series, many and long, which only the imagination can fill, but in the wealth of poetry, orations, sayings, stories, visions, we find no lack of material for the reconstruction of thrilling situations, wars, great political and religious crises, and social upheavals such as find few parallels in history.

The Tribal Dream, and the Tribal God.—In ancient times the dream of all great nations was world sovereignty. For centuries the balance of world power alternated between the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, where Egypt represented the highest world civilization, and the countries on the northeast where the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers made fertile a far-stretching plain. Between these two countries lay Palestine, on the east walled in by mountains and the desert, and along its western border furnishing the only highway between Egypt and Assyria, over which marched and countermarched for centuries the armies of both countries in a long struggle for supremacy. Notwithstanding this perilous geographical situation, the Hebrews from very early times were possessed by a dream of an independent state, which led them to brave wars of conquest and defense, even to the death, in fruitless struggle to fulfill their dream.

This ideal of political independence and even of world supremacy drew its strength from their religion. Ancient tradition told them that centuries before, their great ancestor Abraham had been divinely led to this country, a fair land with room for flocks and herds in abundance, a fit place for the founding of a new tribe and nation. It was said that Jehovah, their God, had selected this land as a dwelling-place for them and for himself. It must be understood that in these early times people had too little knowledge of God to permit them to conceive of him as the one God of all nations. Each nation possessed its own god, and regarded that god as supreme over the gods of other nations. When countries and tribes warred with each other, therefore, they believed that it was the gods who were at war. Victorious gods by their successes proved their superiority, and conquered peoples became not only subjects of their captors, but worshipers of the gods of their conquerors as well.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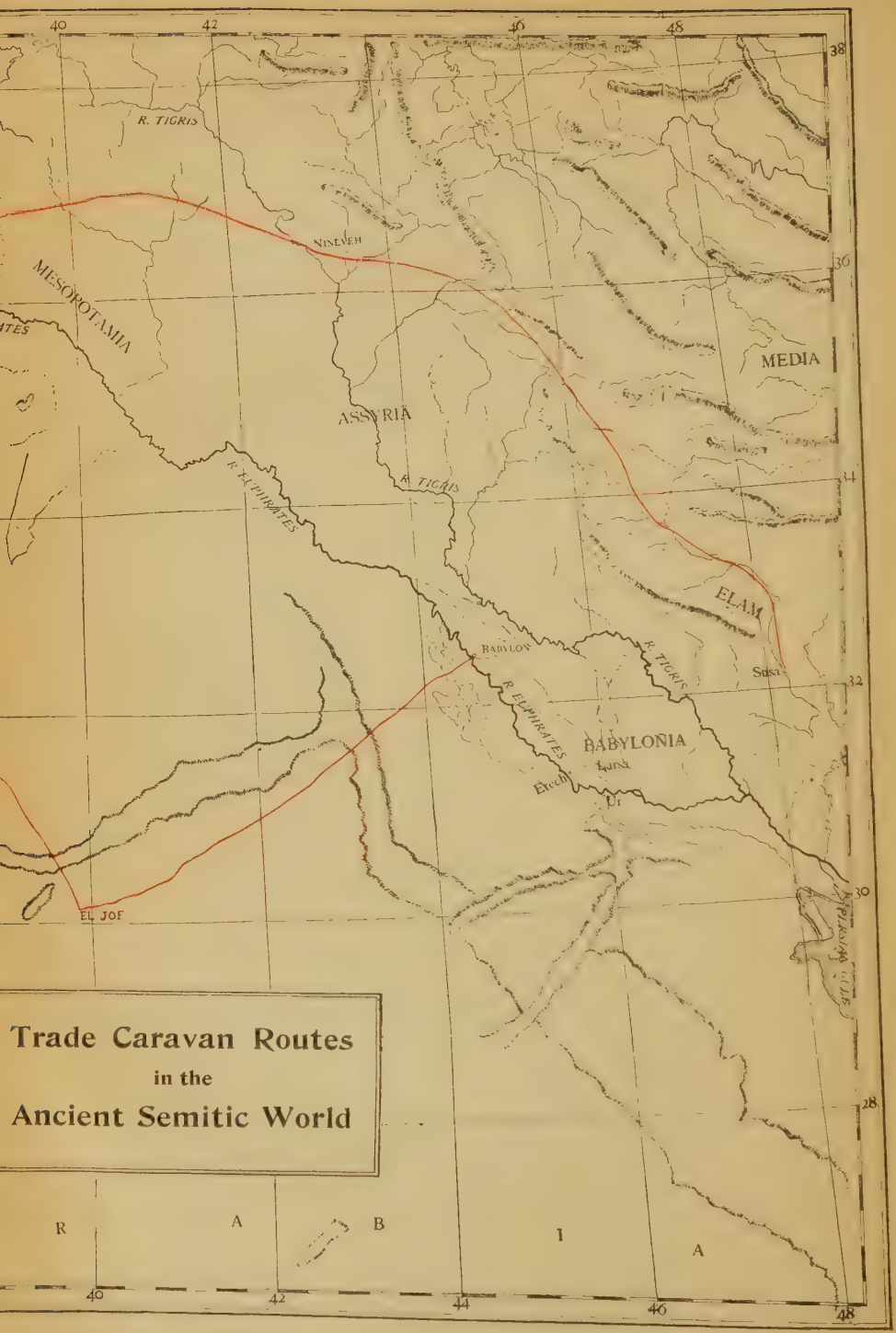
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To Yahweh, or Jehovah, as our English Bible spells the word, the Hebrews had sworn allegiance through a covenant between Jehovah and Moses, a covenant never entirely lost sight of, and renewed from generation to generation by successive great leaders. Through a long period of conquest accompanying their settlement in the land they held tenaciously to the belief that the land of Palestine, or Canaan as it was then called, was Jehovah's permanent abode, and that he had chosen them for his people. Therefore the land was theirs, and its inhabitants, though people of higher civilization than their own, must be driven out in order that Jehovah's people might occupy their place. Every victory thus became a victory of Jehovah, and every defeat was the sign of Jehovah's anger against his people and evidence of his intention to punish them by the temporary withdrawal of his support. The final outcome of such supreme faith was inevitably the belief that Jehovah would eventually conquer the world, and from the land of the Hebrews would be administered the government of the nations.[1]

The Rise of the Hebrew Prophet.—In the history of every people the life of the nation moves forward by distinct stages. An examination of the facts shows the reason of this to lie in the rise now and again of individuals, men or women who are strong enough to impress their ideas upon large groups of people, and to incite them to action. Not infrequently such leadership entails heroic deeds and great self-sacrifice, especially if as in Israel the end at stake be at many points a losing cause when its adherents face defeated hopes and personal degradation. With the Hebrews, patriotism and religion were one. Loyalty to the land meant loyalty to Jehovah. Desire for the favor of God was inseparably linked with desire to live in his land and to enjoy its benefits. It is natural therefore that the great patriots should have been the great reli-

[1] The movement known in modern times as Zionism, a movement which is leading large numbers of Jews to find homes in Palestine, contemplates the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine under the protection of the European powers. It should not be looked upon as an effort of the Jewish people to realize in this age their old dream of a world power in Palestine, to which all nations of the earth would pay homage. In it, however, we see still persisting the hope of a future for the Jewish people, which is the expression of an optimism upheld through all the ages by firm trust in Jehovah.

gious leaders and that chief among the outstanding figures in Hebrew history we should find the prophets of Jehovah. Regarding themselves as the direct representatives of Jehovah, they fought with tongue and pen, and even life itself, to save the nation from the attacks of its outward foes, and from the social and religious dissensions which disturbed it within.

The office of prophet was not peculiar to Israel. Among all ancient nations the gods, deemed too remote and terrible to permit the approach of common mortals, were supposed to communicate their will to men through a special class of persons whose privilege it was to act as intermediaries between the god and his people, interpreting the one to the other. Seers, soothsayers, the interpreters of the Greek oracles, and the Roman haruspices are familiar illustrations of this primary principle. In Israel the Hebrew word *Nabi*, translated prophet, designated a man who interpreted the will and communicated the messages of Jehovah to the people. The following passage which presents the answer which Jehovah was said to have made to the hesitancy of Moses, when he was called upon to lead the captive Hebrews out of the land of Egypt, gives a clear idea of the early thought of the office of the prophet in Israel.

> And Moses said unto Jehovah, "Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." And Jehovah said unto him, "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? is it not I, Jehovah? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak." And he said, "Oh, Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Moses, and he said, "Is there not Aaron, thy brother the Levite? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put the words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God."

The word here translated "spokesman" is the word regularly rendered "prophet" elsewhere in the English Bible.[1]

In its beginnings the religion of the Hebrews, while differing from other religions in certain vital ethical principles, resembled the religion of the surrounding nations in its outward manifestations. Its prophets, in their appearance and methods of work, were very like the prophets of neighboring gods, Chemosh of the Moabites, or Baal of the Phoenicians. On every hand in nature and in human life were insoluble mysteries, all of which were attributed to the gods. It was deemed inevitable that the persons speaking for Jehovah, as well as those who represented other gods, should be clothed in mystery. Accordingly we find that in early times the prophets were subject to mysterious states of ecstasy or trance, the cultivation of these states being frequently preparatory to the act of prophecy. For this purpose there were employed such means as the monotonous whirling dance, still seen in Arabia among the dervishes, musical instruments, weird sounds and cries, strange actions which caused the term "mad fellow" to be applied not infrequently to the early prophet. It was supposed that when in this excited state the prophet, possessed by the spirit of the god, could divine his will and communicate his message, and that he spoke in the very person of the god. Only occasionally in the Old Testament and in the early days do we find evidences of these customs and superstitions as prevalent among the Hebrews. We should doubtless find many more instances had not our literature come from the hands of later prophets, who, in accordance with a more intelligent conception of Jehovah, eliminated those elements of the stories of which they did not approve. A striking illustration is furnished by II Kings 3:15, where music is employed to bring on the prophetic trance. When three kings came to Elisha, one of the early prophets of Israel, to ask advice in an important crisis he said, "But now, bring me a minstrel," and the author continues, "and it used to be that when the minstrel played that the hand of Jehovah

[1] The stories which cluster around the conviction of Moses that he was called to lead his people out of bondage are found in Exod., chaps. 3, 4, of which this selection is from 4: 10–16.

came upon him."[1] The effect of this self-engendered excitement, like intoxication of any sort, varied in different individuals. Some persons might be rendered, for the time being, "mad," others silent, while to some would come eloquence and lofty inspiration not possible to them in a quieter state of mind.

But even in these early days while the Hebrew prophets, regarded by the people with superstitious awe, struggled in spiritual darkness to discern and to interpret the God who was so dimly revealed to them, a great human motive—loyalty to their land—drove them to band themselves together in the cultivation of the spirit of prophecy. Jehovah and the land of Palestine were regarded as inseparable. The future of the land was of the deepest concern to his representatives. We know little of the bands or guilds of the prophets in their daily life, but we find them gathered together wherever battles were in progress, war threatened, or a crisis in government was at hand.

During the wars with the Philistines close to the garrison of the enemy was a "high place,"[2] a sanctuary held by a band of prophets,[3] where doubtless, day by day, they practiced all their arts to overawe the enemy, to encourage the Hebrews, and to induce Jehovah to drive the opposing army out of the land.[4]

Not all the prophets in these groups were great men, not all were wholly sincere, as we shall see in the study of later centuries in Israel, and it will be necessary for us to devote our attention to the great outstanding men upon whose word, many times, the nation depended for strength in danger, and against whom they as fre-

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[1] For other mention of music in connection with the act of prophesying see I Sam. 10:5.

[2] *High-places:* In ancient times it was the custom to establish places of worship upon hills or mountains, as being both remote from disturbing elements, and thus favorable to religious devotion, and also nearer to the gods, who were supposed to inhabit the regions above the earth. When the Hebrews came into Canaan they found many high-places already in use, and doubtless not a few of these were appropriated as centers for the worship of Jehovah, with very little if any changes in the methods of worship.

[3] The grouping of prophets in bands or guilds is referred to also in I Sam. 10:9–12; as "sons of the prophets" in I Kings 20:35*a*; II Kings 2:15–18.

[4] See I Sam. 10:5.

quently turned in bitter hatred. Gradually, as we shall see, the external characteristics which allied the Hebrew prophets with those of other ancient religions were outgrown and fell away. The spirit of God, which they at first believed had manifested itself in them in such strange and even grotesque ways, came to be represented in these greater men by clear political insight, lofty ethical ideals, and a passionate zeal for the perfection of Israel as a state, believing that if it could fulfill the conditions of a fit dwelling-place for Jehovah, he would one day come to earth, and establish his sovereignty over all the world. In our consideration of the messages of a chosen few of these men we shall as frequently as possible study their own words.

Stories of the heroism which produces great deeds, the love of country which leads to great service, regard for the rights of one's fellow-man, high ideals of morality, and noble conceptions of God and the universe are never so old as to lose their power to produce like deeds and character. For this reason as well as for their historical interest it is worth while to spend time and thought in becoming familiar with these great characters of Old Testament times.

CHAPTER II

THE PROPHETS FOUNDING A KINGDOM

The Spirit of the Conquest.—It will be desirable to get before us a picture of conditions in Palestine at the time when the Hebrews appeared as invaders. The land was not a land of savages as America was before the coming of its conquerors, but already a garden spot on the edge of the desert. Its inhabitants were civilized. They cultivated the land, lived in cities, shared the civilization of both Egypt and Phoenicia, were in constant intercourse with both, through trade and commerce, and were vassals of Egypt for long periods. To wrest such a land from its citizens by force seems like a wild dream indeed for a group of tribes without organization, or experience in the arts of war. Yet such was the purpose and the ideal of the invading Hebrews, trusting implicitly in the co-operation of Jehovah.

Century by century the process of expulsion went on, the Hebrews pushing their way, first in one direction, then in another, frequently defeated and despondent, then victorious, and intrenched in new territory. Each victory served to draw the weaker tribes[1] toward the stronger in a union of faith in Jehovah, and to add to the roll of heroes another leader whose faith in ultimate victory was even greater than that of his fellows. Meanwhile from her more civilized foes Israel was acquiring more than the arts of war—she was learning to cultivate the land, to engage in trade, to build altars and homes, to make herself no longer a barbarous foe. Giving by

[1] There was a tradition among the Hebrews that the number of their tribes was twelve, and that these tribes became associated with special sections of the land. The Book of Joshua contains an account of an allotment of the tribes to special territory upon their entrance to the land, but the circumstances of the conquest seem to indicate that the location of only a few of the best-known tribes is at all certain, the accounts which we have being of late origin. Upon the map for this period will be found indicated as much as we can find basis for. The period of the conquest is generally supposed to have extended over some two hundred years or more, perhaps hastened at the end by the more vigorous campaigns of Saul against the Philistines. The death of Saul is placed approximately at 1000 B.C.

PALESTINE: THE UNITED KINGDOM

her prowess promise of defense against the marauding tribes of the desert,[1] she was gradually absorbing large numbers of those Canaanites with whom her people were living in daily intercourse.

We shall begin our study in the centuries when the conquest of the land was drawing to a close, and the scattered tribes were welding themselves together in the beginnings of a nation. The seemingly unconquerable Philistines, occupying the southwest coast of Palestine, a portion of the land most desirable, because of its fertility, and because it was the gateway to Egypt, were scourging the country.[2] Peaceful occupation of any portion of it was impossible while these insatiable foes held fortified cities and commanded well-equipped armies. Among the Hebrews themselves there was yet much of anarchy and confusion. As the writer of the Book of Judges tells us, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

But a new day was dawning for the Hebrews, a day when Jehovah should no longer be interpreted to his people in terms of war and conquest alone. At Shiloh, the chief of the sanctuaries, where the mystic ark of Jehovah was guarded by priests, and where at stated seasons the people of the surrounding country came to offer

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[1] See stories of Gideon and his conquest of the Midianites in Judg., chaps. 6–9. The great Arabian desert, situated on the east and southeast of Palestine, was the home of wandering tribes. Upon its borders in close proximity to Palestine were strong tribes which in the days of the conquest found great profit in reaping by stealth the crops upon the fertile but unprotected plains of Palestine, and in carrying off from the flocks and herds of the Hebrew people and their Canaanitish neighbors sufficient booty to enable them to live as nomads, without the labor of agriculture or settled business.

[2] Note on the map the location of the chief Philistine cities, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Ashdod. Note also the level plain affording great opportunities for crops and pasturage, and easy access to Egypt on the southwest; also the caravan route along which merchants constantly passed bringing facilities for commercial life and the latest accouterments of war. The Philistines were a people comparatively civilized and wealthy, skilful in architecture, sculpture, and work in iron and precious metals. Their boundaries reached to Egypt, and they controlled about 2,000 square miles of territory, much of it exceedingly fertile, upon the southwestern border of which they seem chiefly to have lived. Four periods of Philistine oppression of Israel seem to be recorded in the Old Testament: (1) Judg. 3:31; the deliverer being Shamgar; (2) Judg., chaps. 13–16, when Samson was the Israelitish hero; (3) that of Eli's times, when the ark was captured and Shiloh destroyed; and (4) in Saul's reign ending only with their complete subjection under his successor David.

their sacrifices and to petition Jehovah, a boy was growing up who should one day lead Israel in safety from a condition of scattered tribal organization to a kingdom. To him belongs pre-eminently the title, Samuel, "the maker of kings." [1]

The Records of Samuel's Life.—Two books in our Old Testament, originally one, bear the name of Samuel, and contain the narratives of this period. We do not know the author of these books, and as they appear to us now there are traces of two, and perhaps more, connected narratives woven together by a later historian. One of these might be termed a narrative of Samuel, another a narrative of Saul, another an introduction to the life of David; but the lives of these three men were so woven together, in fact, that it is not difficult from these combined memoirs to obtain a vivid picture of the great prophet as he moved about the country performing the triple service of prophet, priest, and civil judge.

These three words applied to Samuel convey to us also a suggestion of the informal character of the government of the tribes which at this time formed the Israelitish community. The little circuit[2] named as Samuel's route affected a comparatively small

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[1] Shiloh may be located on the map about twelve miles south of Shechem. It is near an old highway between Bethel and Shechem, conveniently located for the pilgrimages of the early Hebrews. In Samuel's time a building with doors had replaced the old tent of meeting. In this primitive temple, secluded by curtains from ordinary view, was kept the ark, a sacred chest of wood, which the Hebrews had brought from their wilderness wanderings, and which signified to them the visible presence of Jehovah. Within it were the tables of stone upon which were graven the Ten Commandments, and other sacred relics. To Shiloh came at stated intervals groups of people from the surrounding communities bringing from vineyards, flocks, and field, offerings to Jehovah. Since Jehovah was supposed to be actually present at Shiloh, prayers might be offered there with greatest assurance of response. Religious festivals with feasting and dancing took place in the vicinity of the temple. Priests were in constant attendance, aided by boys, acolytes, growing up under the tutelage of the priests, expecting to succeed them as old age and other causes made vacancies in the active priesthood. A portion of each of the offerings, at the will of the worshiper, seems to have been given to the priest, and constituted his means of support.

[2] Note in I Sam. 7:15–17, the circuit which Samuel seems to have covered, probably at set times each year, acting, for the period of his stay, as the civil judge. In addition the sacrificial feasts of the village were conducted by him as officiating priest. As the head of the prophetic guilds, he would naturally stimulate the activities of any band of prophets having its home in this vicinity. It is interesting to note that of the places mentioned both Bethel and Gilgal afterward appear as prominent sanctuaries.

section of the whole country. The tribes at the extreme north and south were probably still less stable. There was growing, however, the desire for competent leadership in unified effort against common foes. We shall see in Samuel a man of strong will and clear judgment who might easily have gathered into his own hand absolute power by placing himself upon a throne as Israel's king, but who voluntarily withdrew from a practical regency, and promoted another to the office of king.

The Boyhood of Samuel and His Life at Shiloh.—The accompanying story of the boyhood of Samuel makes clear to us the perils of wars with the Philistines and Israel's lack of a military leader, as well as the primitive conception of Jehovah as a god with a local dwelling-place, manifesting himself with human voice, but with godlike retributive power. It shows us also a government trembling to its fall, under the ineffective leadership of weak men like old Eli and his wicked sons. This family tragedy was again repeated in a succeeding generation when the wayward sons of Samuel were repudiated by the people as successors of their father; but for a period of many years, coincident with the early manhood and the prime of Samuel's life, we find his central figure dominating the national life, drawing the isolated tribes into closer union one with another, and inspiring increasing confidence in the power and love of Jehovah, their God.

Before reading this selection,[1] the notes on this section which are indicated by a star should be studied, and after reading it the remaining notes may be consulted, and likewise with all inserted selections.

Now the sons of Eli were base men; they knew not Jehovah,[2] nor the due of the priests from the people. When any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was boiling, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into
5 the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up the priest took therewith. So they did in Shiloh unto all the

[1] I Sam. 2:12–18; 3:1–21; 4:1 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] **Knew not Jehovah:* did not understand his character and therefore lived in disregard of his moral laws, and also of the hallowed custom of accepting such compensation as the worshiper gave freely, after Jehovah's portion had been properly consecrated by the burning of the fat.

Israelites that come thither. Yea, before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, "Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have boiled flesh of thee, but raw." And if the man said unto him, "They will surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as thy soul desireth"; then he would say, "Nay, but thou shalt give it me now: and if not I will take it by force." And the sin of the young men was very great before Jehovah; for the men despised the offering of Jehovah.

But Samuel ministered before Jehovah, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.[1]

To disregard thus the sacredness of the offerings brought to Jehovah was a violation of the ritual of worship, which among all ancient nations was regarded as a great offense to the god. It is likely also that the enforced idleness of priests at a small sanctuary and their inherent sense of privilege had caused many forms of dissipation to creep into the life of the priesthood at Shiloh. Then as now forms of worship without sincerity were valueless, and Eli's sons were seeking only personal gain and pleasure in their sacred office. To people of that day, however, a violation of the ritual of Jehovah was a greater crime than a moral offense, the dangers of which it remained for the prophets to reveal.

But the child Samuel ministered unto Jehovah before Eli. And the word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no widespread vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place (now his eyes had begun to wax dim, so that he could not see), and the lamp of God[2] was not yet gone out, and Samuel was laid down[3] to sleep, in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was; that Jehovah called[4] "Samuel, Samuel": and he

[1] **Ephod:* here, a garment worn by priests; elsewhere, an instrument of divination.

[2] **Lamp of God:* a special lamp upon the altar, probably filled with oil enough to last for the night, so that the hour must have been near morning.

[3] **Laid down:* indicating that at least some of the attendants slept within the temple inclosure.

[4] **Jehovah called:* Samuel was now possibly in the neighborhood of twelve or fourteen years of age. The writer of this story undoubtedly believed that Jehovah spoke with human voice and appeared in visible form. To us who believe that the voice of God to the heart is stronger than any physical presence, the view of the early prophet is important only from the point of view of the history of religious ideas. The precise method by which Jehovah communicated his wishes to Samuel is not so important as the fact itself, namely, that he did inspire Samuel to do his bidding.

said, "Here am I." And he ran unto Eli, and said, "Here am I; for thou calledst me." And he said, "I called not; lie down again." And he went and lay down. And Jehovah called yet again, "Samuel." And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here am I; for thou calledst me." And he answered, "I called not, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know Jehovah, neither was the word of Jehovah yet revealed unto him. And Jehovah called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here am I; for thou calledst me." And Eli perceived that Jehovah had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, "Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Jehovah; for thy servant heareth." So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And Jehovah came, and stood, and called as at other times "Samuel, Samuel." Then Samuel said, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." And Jehovah said to Samuel, "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.[1] In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end. For I have told[2] him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated with sacrifice nor offering for ever."

And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors[3] of the house of Jehovah. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision. Then Eli called Samuel, and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here am I." And he said, "What is the thing that Jehovah hath spoken unto thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide anything from me of all the things that he spake unto thee." And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is Jehovah: let him do what seemeth him good."

And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to

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[1] **Ears shall tingle:* with surprise and consternation.

[2] Lines 24–30: Reference is here made to some previous communication to Eli.

[3] **Opened the doors:* With the Hebrews great phenomena of nature were identified with the direct acts of Jehovah. The rising and the setting of the sun were seasons filled with awe and marked by sacrifices. The doors of the temple were thrown open to the east at sunrise when the morning sacrifice also began.

Beer-sheba[1] knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah. And Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh; for Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah.
45 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.[2]

Samuel Leading to Victory.—Samuel next appears upon the pages of the narrative more than twenty years after the destruction of Shiloh and the capture of the Ark by the Philistines,[3] in an assembly of the people gathered at Mizpah,[4] one of the cities of Samuel's circuit. The Philistines were still aggressive. At the call of Samuel, Israel put away all the foreign gods which were a constant temptation to the people, surrounded as they were by enemies whose success was attributed to the strength of their gods. A great wave of enthusiasm for Jehovah, probably instigated by Samuel and his associates, swept over the nation, and assembled Israel through Samuel cried out to Jehovah for relief from her oppressors. Great sacrifices were offered, the people calling, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines." The story of the battle to which this assembly was a preliminary and which was won by the Israelites is told in I Sam. 7:3–14. Peace reigned for the time being, and Samuel enjoyed a supremacy which none questioned. The record follows: "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places, and his return was to Ramah, for there was his house, and there he judged Israel; and he built there an altar unto the Lord."

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[1] **Dan to Beersheba:* Note on the map the two cities marking approximately the northern and southern boundaries of the land.

[2] *Appeared in Shiloh:* Of these revelations we have no further record. Whether they refer to traditions of distinct appearances or to the fact of Samuel's ever-increasing understanding of Jehovah and his will we do not know.

[3] The story of the victory of the Philistines through which the threats of Jehovah were fulfilled, and the legends of the disasters which befell the Philistine country while the ark of God was kept in Philistine territory, resulting in its return to the Hebrews, are told in I Sam. 4:1—7:2.

[4] *Mizpah:* The name signifies "the watchtower." A crusaders' church now stands over a spot which, tradition says, marks the grave of Samuel. All such sites are, however, a matter of pure speculation.

A Crisis in Government.—But old age came to Samuel. Palestine was the center of a busy life. The caravan routes from Egypt to the great northeast led right across the center of the land, and along its western coastline.[1] The more advanced civilization of the older Philistine and other Canaanitish cities had greatly affected the life of the Hebrews. The Philistines were still aggressively seeking to grasp the hardly won territory of Israel. Following a natural precedent as seen among other peoples, Samuel named his sons as his successors. They were unworthy of the high office, dishonest, open to bribery and corruption, and were promptly repudiated by the people whom Samuel himself had trained to higher ideals. "Other nations have kings," said Israel with one voice, "why not we?"[2]

Samuel was now confronted with a desire for unity and a national ambition which was largely the result of his own influence. Later writers, as seen by one of the accounts which we shall read, emphasized the reluctance with which Samuel moved in response to the request of the people, but we must believe that the sound judgment which had marked his career led him to see that a great military leader would be the salvation of Israel from the hands of her foes. In two of the accounts we find no mention of reluctance but co-operation in finding a king so prompt and definite as to suggest that the coming of the kingdom had long been in the mind of Samuel. Was there in the thought of Samuel at this time an ambition to be himself the people's king? Did he shrink from the establishment of another great power in the land, a civil power which might come between Jehovah and his people, which might even ignore the voice of his prophets? We have no hint of this in the earlier stories, unless it be in Samuel's insistence that the king shall be one of Jehovah's choice, and in this as in earlier days his judgment prevailed.

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[1] Consult the map of the Semitic World for the caravan routes.

[2] The Hebrews were of course familiar with the government of the older nations, Egypt, Syria, and Assyria, and her own more insignificant neighbors, Moab, Phoenicia, Edom, etc. But at this time they thought of a king chiefly as the leader of their armies.

The Choice of the King.—We have three different traditions of the actual choice of the new king.[1] All three are here given, for each is of peculiar interest. The important thing to note is that in all of them Samuel is the commanding figure. His authority in Israel as the representative of Jehovah was not lessened by the impending change of government. His was still a supremacy which was allied in the minds of the people with the mysteries of God and the universe. It could only be overthrown by failure to interpret Jehovah truly.

First Account—Chosen by Samuel Privately[2]

Now there was a man of Benjamin,[3] whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah, the son of a Benjamite, a mighty man of wealth. And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a young man and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people. And the asses of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, "Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses." And he passed through the hill-country of Ephraim,[4] and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shaalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not.

When they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, "Come, and let us return, lest my father leave off caring for the asses, and be anxious for us." And he said unto him, "Behold now there is in this city a man of God,[5] and he

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[1] It should be recalled that the records of the history of the Hebrews which we possess are literary fragments, gathered from many sources. It is not strange therefore that we have seemingly divergent accounts of the same event. We can only weigh them in the light of all that we can discover of the spirit and the life of the period, and must even then be satisfied with knowing that we cannot get at the exact facts. We can gather from these three accounts, however, that Saul was welcomed as king by the people as well as by Samuel.

[2] I Sam. 9:1—10:1; 10:19*b*–24; 11:14, 15 (chiefly Am. Standard Rev. Ver.).

[3] **Benjamin:* one of the smallest of the tribes, whose territory can be noted on the map.

[4] *Hill country of Ephraim:* Trace this trip on the map.

[5] **Man of God:* one who officially represented God. Note that the thing which they expected of the prophet was much the same that some people might expect of a

is a man that is held in honor; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can tell us concerning our journey whereon we go." Then said Saul to his servant, "But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?" And the servant answered Saul again, and said, "Behold, I have in my hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way." (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, Come, and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.) Then said Saul to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went unto the city where the man of God was.

As they went up the ascent to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water,[1] and said unto them, "Is the seer here?" And they answered them, and said, "He is; behold, he is before thee: make haste now, for he is come to-day into the city; for the people have a sacrifice to-day in the high place. As soon as ye are come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he goeth up to the high place to eat,[2] for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that are bidden. Now therefore get you up; for at this time ye shall find him." And they came within the gate; and as they came within the city, behold, Samuel came out toward them, to go up to the high place.

Now Jehovah had revealed unto Samuel a day before Saul came, saying, To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be leader over my people Israel; and he shall save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, Jehovah said

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clairvoyant today. The story indicates that it was the custom to pay for such services. A shekel was a piece of silver of any shape weighing 56 Troy grains, in value about twenty cents. Note the old name for prophet, a seer.

[1] **To draw water:* The water supply of Palestine was subject to exhaustion through frequent drought. It was carefully husbanded. Each village had its common well from which the women drew water for flocks and for domestic use. The seer was well known in the village. The high place was on the hill back of the city, the village well at its foot.

[2] **To eat:* Note the sacrificial meal and other interesting customs connected with the offering of the sacrifice.

unto him, "Behold, the man of whom I said to thee, this same shall have authority over my people." Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is." And Samuel answered Saul, and said, "I am the seer; go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to-day: and in the morning I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thy heart.[1] And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?" And Saul answered and said, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?"

And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the dining hall,[2] and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, who were about thirty persons. And Samuel said unto the cook, "Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee." And the cook took up the thigh, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold, that which hath been reserved! set it before thee and eat; because unto the appointed time hath it been kept for thee, for I said, I have invited the people." So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

And when they were come down from the high place into the city, he communed with Saul upon the housetop. And they arose early: and it came to pass early in the morning that Samuel called to Saul on the housetop, saying, "Up, that I may send thee away." And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel abroad. As they were going down at the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Bid the servant pass on before us," and he passed on, "but stand thou still first, that I may cause thee to hear the word of God."

Then Samuel took the vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, "Is it not that Jehovah hath anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?"[3]

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[1] *All that is in thy heart:* Perhaps it was already Saul's ambition to lead his people against the Philistines.

[2] **Dining-hall:* connected with the sanctuary, probably a feature of all sacrificial centers.

[3] **Jehovah hath anointed thee:* The anointing of a king by pouring oil upon his

Second Account—Chosen by Lot with Samuel's Co-operation[1]

"Now therefore present yourselves before Jehovah by your tribes, and by your thousands." So Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken. And he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by their families; and the family of the Matrites was taken; and Saul the son of Kish was taken: but when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they asked of Jehovah further, "Is the man yet come hither?" And Jehovah answered, "Behold, he hath hid himself among the baggage." And they ran and fetched him thence; and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, "See ye him whom Jehovah hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?" And all the people shouted, and said, "Long live the king."

Third Account—by Public Acclaim after a Deed of Bravery[2]

Then said Samuel to the people, "Come, and let us go to Gilgal,[3] and renew the kingdom there." And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before Jehovah in Gilgal; and there they offered sacrifices of peace-offerings[4] before Jehovah; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

Samuel Establishes a New Standard of Conduct.—Saul was pre-eminently a military leader. His successful campaigns against the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, and the Amalekites,

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head was a custom followed in Egypt and adopted by the Canaanites and probably from them by the Hebrews. With the Hebrews the ceremony was supposed to impart special endowment of the spirit of Jehovah. It was originally used only for the consecration of a king.

[1] *The second account of the choosing of a king represents the custom of the sacred lot cast by the representatives of the surrounding tribes, at the call of Samuel. We do not know the exact details of the ceremony, but only that upon Saul fell the fortunate designation.

[2] *The third account should be read as a sequence of Saul's heroic deliverance of the men of Jabesh Gilead, found in I Sam. 11:1–11. The word "renew" in vs. 14 may be the interpretation of a later writer who was trying to harmonize this with one of the other accounts. We may regard it, however, as only one of several different views as to the precise method and occasion through which Saul actually took possession of the throne.

[3] **Gilgal:* another of the towns on Samuel's circuit, afterward a noted sanctuary.

[4] **Peace-offerings:* represented general friendly relations with Jehovah.

as well as the Philistines, gave to Israel prestige as a people to be reckoned with.[1] Her king felt more and more his power and the favor of Jehovah which was manifested in successful wars. He had still to learn the strength of Samuel, jealously guarding his ideal of the commands of Jehovah. The following story shows Samuel in the grandeur of his unflinching demands for obedience, before which even the king must weakly excuse himself, and finally humbly bow. In lines 50–55 we find the essence of the religion of Jehovah as conceived by Samuel. All other gods might be placated by great sacrifices, and external offerings. To Jehovah these were nothing if unaccompanied by the spirit of obedience.

[2]And Samuel said unto Saul, "Jehovah sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, I have marked that which Amalek did to Israel, how he set himself against him in the way, when he came up out of Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

And Saul summoned the people, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to the city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. And Saul said unto the Kenites,[3] "Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. And Saul smote the Amalekites, from Havilah as thou goest to Shur, that is before Egypt. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites, alive,[4] and utterly destroyed all the people with the

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[1] **Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Amalekites:* Locate these on the map and notice their relation to the land of the Hebrews. The tribes on the southeast had interfered with Israel's progress in her endeavors to enter Palestine.

[2] I Sam. 15:1–23, 35 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] **Kenites:* a tribe connected with Moses by marriage, and tradition said always friendly to the Hebrews.

[4] *Took Agag alive:* Nations were greatly enriched by the spoils of war. It was also customary to hold royal personages as captives for sale rather than to kill them. Samuel's command prohibited such profit. This was a most important victory, news of which would quickly be carried to every part of the kingdom. Samuel was probably watching for news of the outcome.

edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Then came the word of Jehovah unto Samuel, saying, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments." And Samuel was wroth; and he cried unto Jehovah all night. And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning;[1] and it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a monument,[2] and turned, and passed on, and went down to Gilgal." And Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said unto him, "Blessed be thou of Jehovah: I have performed the commandment of Jehovah." And Samuel said, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Then Samuel said unto Saul, "Stay, and I will tell thee what Jehovah hath said to me this night." And he said unto him, "Say on.

And Samuel said, "Though thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel? And Jehovah anointed thee king over Israel; and Jehovah sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of Jehovah, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah?" And Saul said unto Samuel, "Yea, I have obeyed the voice of Jehovah, and have gone the way which Jehovah sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the devoted things, to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God in Gilgal." And Samuel said, "Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.[3] For rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as idolatry

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[1] *To meet Saul:* Samuel doubtless expected Saul to come to him for the offering of the sacrifice in celebration of the victory.

[2] *Monument:* to commemorate the victory.

[3] Lines 50–55 represent the characteristic teaching of Samuel.

and teraphim.[1] Because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

And Samuel came no more to see Saul. And Samuel mourned on account of Saul, whom Jehovah repented that he had made king.

Samuel Selects a New King.—The withdrawal of the support of Samuel possibly had much to do with the attacks of melancholy and wild jealousy which made Saul's later years a burden, and left to posterity the memory of a morose and unjust persecutor of one who was to be his successor, rather than that of the valiant soldier which he as truly was.

But Samuel had not done with kings when from his point of view Saul proved to be a failure. We find him ready as before to seek the man for the times and to forestall the succession in Saul's family. That the following story does not represent Samuel's first introduction to the family of Jesse we can hardly doubt, since his mission to Bethlehem to offer the great sacrifice was probably not an uncommon one.[2]

And Jehovah said unto Samuel, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel? fill thy horn with oil, and go: I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite; for I have provided me a king among his sons." And Samuel said, "How can I go without Saul's knowledge? If he hear it, he will kill me."[3] And Jehovah said, "Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee." And Samuel did that which Jehovah spake, and came to Bethlehem.[4] And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling,[5] and said, "Comest thou peace-

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[1] **Teraphim:* a form of household idol.

[2] I Sam. 16: 1–13 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] **He will kill me:* showing how bitter was the estrangement between Samuel and Saul.

[4] *Bethlehem, the birthplace of the man who became Israel's ideal king, became also in later prophecy the place from which the great king of the Hebrew ideal state should come. "But thou Bethlehem . . . . out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."

[5] **Came to meet him trembling:* The fear of the wrath of Jehovah was all-pervading in those days. Samuel's coming might mean some portentous announcement. He is met by the officials of the city.

ably?" And he said, "Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto Jehovah: sanctify yourselves,[1] and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

15 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, "Surely Jehovah's anointed is before him." But Jehovah said unto Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him: for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appear-
20 ance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart."[2] Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither hath Jehovah chosen this." Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, "Neither hath Jehovah chosen this." And Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto
25 Jesse, "Jehovah hath not chosen these." And Samuel said unto Jesse, "Are here all thy children?" And he said, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said unto Jesse, "Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither."[3] And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was
30 ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And Jehovah said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

In Death as in Life a Ruler of Kings.[4]—It is not our purpose in this volume to present a history of Israel and her kings, except in

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[1] **Sanctify yourselves:* Perhaps by ablutions, and by abstinence from anything deemed ceremonially unclean.

[2] Line 20: Join this clause in thought with 15: 22*b*. Does the need of such sincerity as this standard demands enter into our modern life? If not what reforms are necessary? What changes in methods from those used by Samuel would be desirable? Apply the test to politics and government, religion and the church, as we see them, the business world, individuals in society, ourselves and others.

[3] *Line 28: "We will not sit down," meaning to the sacrificial meal.

[4] *Although the monarchy was so new, it was natural to expect that Saul's son would succeed him. Jonathan, an honorable and lovable man, and no mean warrior, perished with his father in the battle on Mount Gilboa, and no other son of Saul seems to have been strong enough to forestall David in the confidence of the people. There was a futile attempt to set up a rival kingdom in the north, but it soon ended in disaster.

so far as the history was influenced by the prophets.[1] David, coming into contact with Saul's court, was soon attached to his army and became the victorious leader of many battles. His popularity increased while that of Saul waned. Years of persecution followed, during which there was no hint of any sympathy with Saul on the part of Samuel; and David, ever loyal to his people, even when an exile, waited, probably with the expressed approval of Samuel, for his time of authority to come. Of the time or manner of the death of Samuel we have no record, but the last note of triumph for the prophet is given us in a story of Saul's tragic appeal to the spirit of Samuel in the face of an impending battle which he feared to enter without the assurance of Jehovah's assistance. Not even the spirit of Samuel could be prevailed upon to give comfort. Then as before, "Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord" sounded the death knell in the heart of Saul. Whether the visit of Saul to the witch of Endor[2] be a fact or not, it is clear that to him the favor of the prophet meant the favor of God, without which he could no longer brave the perils of battle with his old undaunted spirit, and his tragic death in defeat soon follows.

Another View of Saul.—The lament of David over Saul and his son Jonathan helps us perhaps to do justice to a king whose lot fell in troubled times, and whose faults, pictured by prophetic writers, may have been made too greatly to overshadow his virtues.

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[1] The story of the changing relations of Saul and David is graphically told in I Sam. 16:14—II Sam., chap. 1. The introduction of David to the court of Saul, his friendship with Jonathan, Saul's son, his successes as the leader of Saul's armies, his growing popularity with the people echoed in the ancient song of the streets and the camp,

"Saul hath slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands,"

Saul's estrangement from Samuel, his fits of depression which David's music was said to charm away, his bitter jealousy of the popularity of David resulting in attempts upon the life of the latter by both stratagem and open attack, David's exile and outlaw life—these form a tragic story of unfulfilled hopes and failing courage.

[2] The story of Saul's visit to the witch of Endor is found in I Sam. 28: 3–25, and that of the fatal battle with the Philistines in 31:1–13. Vs. 3 of chap. 28 shows us that the practice of consulting spirits had been and probably still was common, although the influence of Samuel and the mandate of the king had placed such practices under a formal ban. In Saul's desperate state of mind there is nothing more improbable in this story than in the spiritualistic and clairvoyant tales of our own day, and doubtless the same possibility of deception.

[1,2]And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son (it is written in the book of Jashar):[3]

Hear, O Judah, hard things,
Be grieved, O Israel.
Upon thy heights, the slain;
How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,[4]
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.[5]

Ye mountains of Gilboa,[6]
Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offerings:[7]
For there the shield of the mighty was cast away defiled,
The shield of Saul, as of one not anointed.

From the blood of the slain,
From the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided:
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet delicately,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!

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[1] *Tradition gives to David great prestige as a poet. Much has been ascribed to him which was probably the production of a later date, but this old song is full of poetic feeling, and in all probability genuine.

[2] II Sam. 1:19–27.

[3] **Book of Jashar:* an older collection of national poetry from which our author took this poem.

[4] **Gath, Ashkelon:* Philistine cities; see note, p. 9.

[5] **The uncircumcised:* The rite of circumcision was shared by the Hebrews with many other ancient nations, but came with them to have the significance of adoption into the covenant relation with Jehovah. All uncircumcised people were supposed to be outside the realm of his interest.

[6] **Gilboa:* Locate on map.

[7] Line 12: as a sign of mourning.

O Jonathan, slain upon thy high places!
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!

Samuel a Typical Prophet.—We have dwelt longer upon the life of Samuel than we should have done, had it not been necessary to establish through the study of this first great prophet certain principles for the study of all prophecy. Is it not clear that we have seen in this man a mighty spirit, rising far above his fellows? As a statesman with sane judgment he read the signs of his times. Forgetful of self he exalted another to an office higher than his own, but in doing so secured the unity necessary for the development of a national political and religious life. As a prophet of Jehovah, denouncing the superstitions of his age, in majestic dignity and calm, he divined without frenzy or outward symbol the will of Jehovah. Interpreting the spirit of Jehovah as well as his power, he established for the religion of Jehovah a new ideal of sincerity, "Obedience is better than sacrifice"—the spirit is more than the act. As we proceed with our study we shall see that these are preeminently the qualities of the great men who led Israel from paganism to the highest spiritual development, and bequeathed to us some of the fundamental principles of our religion. And among them none had a greater task than Samuel, who found Israel a scattered group of warring tribes and left it a nation secure in its faith in Jehovah.

CHAPTER III

A CENTURY OF HISTORY

The death of Saul is placed approximately at 1000 B.C. We shall be obliged to consider in a brief chapter the changes which took place in Israel in one hundred and twenty-five years following that event. The kingdom attained under David, the successor of Saul, a territory so great as to include not only all of Palestine (excepting only a narrow strip of coast line to the southwest still held by the Philistines) but also a portion of the land of Syria, on the northeast. Friendly relations were also established with Phoenicia on the northwest. Not only so, but David organized the kingdom, strengthened it internally, ruled it so wisely, and was so beloved by his people as to stand in all the centuries following as the type of the perfect king. His kingdom was the ideal toward which the efforts of Israel were ever afterward directed.

The extravagance and tyranny of his son Solomon produced a more glorious kingdom externally, but aroused a spirit of revolt in the hearts of a people which had never yet learned to bow to one who ruled only by virtue of blood succession.[1] At the death of Solomon, therefore, the kingdom, at its greatest not larger than three hundred miles from north to south, was divided, the inhabitants of the northern section revolting against Rehoboam, the successor of David's line, and founding an independent kingdom.[2] It is significant that the king who was placed upon the throne in the north had the full support of the prophets, who were ever the champions of the people against oppression and injustice. The two nations are henceforth to be known as Israel, on the north, and Judah, on the south.

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[1] The system of taxation devised by Solomon by which his kingdom was divided into twelve parts, each part being responsible for the maintenance of the royal household for the period of one month in the year, is but one of the evidences of the burden which his increased establishment and his extravagance placed upon the people. See I Kings, chap. 4, for this and other evidences of the splendor of Solomon's reign. The story of the building and dedication of the Temple follows in chaps. 5–8.

[2] The story of the division of the kingdom is related in I Kings, chap. 12.

Jerusalem remained the capital of the southern kingdom, and the stronghold of the Jehovah religion, with its magnificent temple erected by Solomon. Shechem, the first capital of the northern kingdom, was afterward exchanged for Tirzah and again for Samaria, built upon the hills a thousand feet above the surrounding valley, a strong site for military defense. Jerusalem also, well fortified by David, was well-nigh impregnable, situated upon a rocky summit that presented almost insuperable difficulties to a besieging army.

It was hardly to be expected that two kingdoms of one blood could exist peacefully side by side in such a limited territory, their capitals but thirty miles apart. The south with Jerusalem, the capital of the once united kingdom, longed for her old sovereignty over the north, and her repeated attempts to establish her claim caused almost constant warfare between Israel and Judah. Lying back among the hills, however, apart from the main routes of travel, with Israel to act as a buttress between her and the encroaching armies of Syria and Assyria on the northeast, Judah remained for a century comparatively undisturbed. The Davidic succession gave stability to her government. The Temple, at first only a royal sanctuary, became increasingly the center of religious worship, and long and peaceful reigns enabled the country to develop commercially and socially.

In the north the case was far different. Continually harrassed by warfare with Judah, Israel lay open also to the north and east, unprotected by the natural barriers of mountain ranges and deserts from the invasions of Syria and Assyria, who were seeking to command her coveted roads and territory. Her unstable government founded in revolution continued under kings whose only right to rule lay in superior military power, temporary popularity, or party support. The kingdom was therefore subject to conditions of anarchy and sudden and violent changes in the ruling dynasty.[1] The growing power of Syria on the northeast was at times augmented by her temporary alliance with Judah, and in 875 B.C.,

[1] For such records as we have of the anarchy and confusion of the government in the Northern Kingdom previous to the accession of Omri read I Kings 15:25–28; 15:33—16:28.

THE HILLTOP SITE OF ANCIENT SAMARIA

when Ahab came to the throne, many Israelitish cities were in the hands of the Syrians, notwithstanding the fact that Ahab's father, Omri, was one of the strongest of the kings of northern Israel. So great had become the danger from this source that for the time Israel and Judah had combined against a common enemy.

But northern Israel was not only in danger of loss of territory, but even of existence as a separate state.[1] Exposed to all the influences of the ancient world, torn by internal dissensions and enduring the shocks of foreign invasion, the stream of life ran deep and fast. Currents of thought common to the surrounding nations swept over Israel, bringing foreign ideals of conduct and life. The tide of commerce and of warring armies constantly ebbing and flowing across her territory revealed the wealth and display, class systems and moral conditions of the greater nations, which, in the earlier days, had passed unheeded amidst the struggles of the conquest, yet which made a strong appeal to the ambitions and natural proclivities of an oriental people. Jehovah worship had gradually proved itself stronger than the Canaanitish worship, absorbing from it what was good and shaking off, under the leadership of Samuel and his fellows, much that was evil. But it became a grave question as to whether Jehovah worship would not be swallowed up or exterminated by foreign influences, supported as they were by the splendor and the military prowess of these greater nations. Social abuses, the aristocracy of wealth, formal and ostentatious worship accompanied by debasing orgies, disregard of the rights of one's fellow-men, inability to conceive of Jehovah as a God whose approval could not be obtained by external gifts, use of images in the worship of Jehovah, a custom not new in Israel, but given great prestige in the north through the royal sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan where Jehovah was represented by the golden calves—these were the influences in the face of which Jehovah worship had to win the allegiance of the people or perish.

Not in the more peaceful southern kingdom, but in the busy north in these critical days do we find the prophets of Jehovah. Greatly increased in numbers since the days of Samuel, but still

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[1] See chap. vi.

acknowledging the leadership of the great ones among them, we see them with keen political insight and the ardor of religious enthusiasts throwing themselves into the task of saving both state and religion, which to them were inseparable.

Not even the growing influence of the throne could turn these prophets from their ideals and their intention to force them upon Israel. Long and bitter were the struggles of such of the prophets as found themselves in disagreement with their kings, yet we must believe that the prophet had always his constituency, with the existence of which even kings had to reckon. It is to the study of the work of such a prophet that we turn in the succeeding chapter.

PALESTINE: THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

CHAPTER IV

THE PROPHETS AND THE NEW GOD IN ISRAEL

An appreciation of the strength of Elijah the prophet who was the central figure in this period must be based upon an appreciation of the ability and sagacity of King Ahab of northern Israel, with whom he measured his power. Ahab came to the throne by inheritance from his father, one of the ablest kings of Israel, about 875 B.C. From his strong capital at Samaria he had, encouraged by the prophets, assumed an aggressive attitude toward Syria, and had in fact won two decisive battles which restored a part of Israel's lost territory and gave assurance of temporary peace. Meantime a new and greater foe was appearing upon the horizon. Assyria was commencing her western campaigns, which held not only Palestine but Syria in deadly fear for centuries. All three nations, Syria, Israel, and Judah, banded themselves together in a temporary alliance against Assyria, sharing in a defeat which ended the brief confederacy. We find this event recorded on the Assyrian monuments. But Ahab had further strengthened his kingdom by an alliance with Phoenicia, confirmed by his marriage with the princess Jezebel, the daughter of the priest-king of Tyre, one of the chief principalities of Phoenicia.

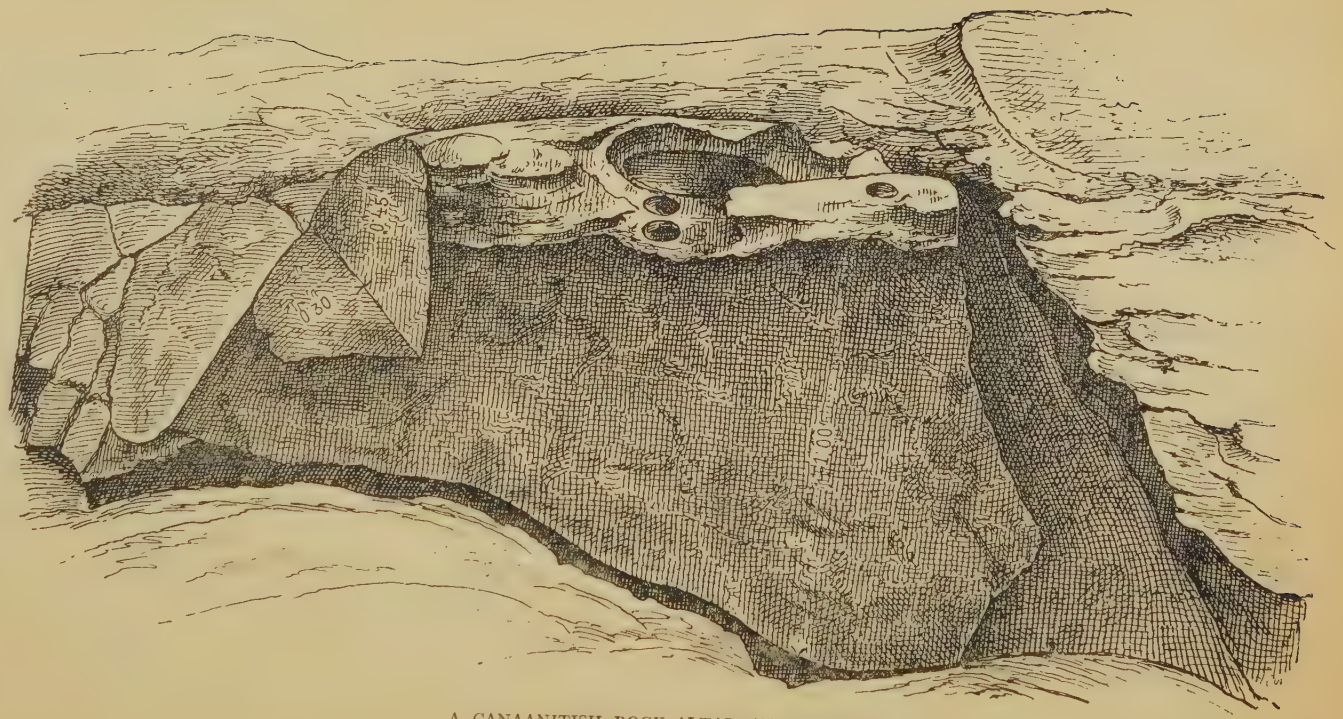
In accordance with the custom of ancient nations the gods of both parties were recognized. Jezebel, a religious enthusiast, as well as a woman of great force, brought with her to Samaria a new and foreign religion, the worship of the Phoenician Baal. A species of Baalism had existed in Palestine from the earliest times, as the old religion of the Canaanites, who had preceded the Hebrews. It was a simple worship of the powers of nature, and had presented no great obstacle to the religion of Jehovah, its worst practices having been stamped out by the prophets, and its powers passed over to the current conception of Jehovah, who was now looked upon as the giver of fertility and the god of all the processes of Nature.

The Phoenician Baalism was something vastly different. It not only attributed to Baal all increase in lands, flocks, and family, but its worship was accompanied by ceremonies most debasing, frequently amounting to debauchery and crime. Introduced as it was by the coming of a new queen, with a large body of professional Baal prophets, such a religion, giving license under the guise of worship to the worst passions of men and women, took a fearful hold upon a hot-blooded oriental people. The prophets of Jehovah, seeing clearly that it was only the distinctive and inspiring religion of Israel that had enabled her to avoid absorption by the surrounding nations, and that not only the religion of Jehovah was at stake, but the very existence of the nation itself, banded themselves together in a fury of opposition to the foreign god. It was a fight to the death. Jezebel, resenting their interference with what she considered her rights, instituted a persecution of the prophets of Jehovah, in which many were slaughtered and hundreds of them driven from the land. Her husband, King Ahab, seems not to have abandoned the religion of his fathers, but evidently saw no great danger in the Phoenician Baalism.

Here was indeed a crisis for the prophets. The glories and the insidious immoralities of Baal worship were pitted against the simplicity and the stern morality of the religion of Jehovah. Which would survive?

Elijah the Spokesman of the Prophets.—Although well-nigh exterminated as an organized body, the faith of the prophets who survived the persecution of Jezebel was not shaken. There was need only of a spokesman strong enough for the situation. Such a one appeared in the person of Elijah. Coming from the east of the Jordan, clothed in the hairy mantle which seems at one time to have characterized the dress of the prophet, fierce and majestic in his solitude, unmindful of the terrors of Jezebel's persecution, he appeared before Ahab, ready, alone and unaided, to put to the test the power of Jehovah over the forces of Nature. The rain upon which all Palestine depended for life-giving showers should furnish the instrument of this test. The record tells us, "And Elijah from Tishbe of Gilead,[1] said unto Ahab, As Jehovah the

[1] Locate Gilead on the map east of the Jordan.



A CANAANITISH ROCK-ALTAR AT MEGIDDO

God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these three years, but according to my word."

As suddenly as the prophet had come, he disappeared. We have stories of him, as he passed from place to place, driven by the drought, to find food and drink, until beyond the borders of Palestine, in Phoenicia, he waited until a sufficient time had elapsed to teach his lesson of Jehovah's hand in the drought. The following story of his return after three years is preceded by a tragic picture of conditions of famine in the land, as King Ahab and his chief minister, Obadiah, traveled, each in a different direction about the land, vainly seeking for water with which to save the lives of a few of the horses and mules from the royal stables. It also reveals to us the long and fruitless three years' search of Ahab for Elijah, and suggests mysterious disappearances of the unrelenting prophet when Ahab's pursuers were close upon his track.

And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, "Is it thou, my lord Elijah?" And he answered him, "It is I: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here." And he said, "Wherein have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As Jehovah thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not here, he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it will come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of Jehovah will carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he will slay me: but I thy servant fear Jehovah from my youth.[1] Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of Jehovah, how I hid a hundred men of Jehovah's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here; and he will slay me." And Elijah said, "As Jehovah of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him to-day."[2]

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[1] * Note the thoroughness of Ahab's search. It is clear that Obadiah fears that Elijah may disappear as he has apparently done in former times, transported, as Obadiah thinks, by the spirit of Jehovah. Evidently there was great mystery surrounding the coming and going of Elijah.

[2] **Jehovah of Hosts:* here the god of battle, but later the term came to have a more spiritual significance.

Jehovah or Baal: The Test by Fire.[1]—It is only as we put ourselves in the place of Elijah, to whom the long drought in accordance with his prediction was the direct act of Jehovah in fulfilment of the word of his prophet, that we can even imagine the strength of a belief which would induce Elijah to propose to Ahab the test by fire which the following story relates.[2]

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and thou hast followed the Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel,[3] and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the Asherah[4] four hundred, that eat at Jezebel's table."

So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. And Elijah came near unto all the people, and said "How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, "I, even I only, am left a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Jehovah: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God." And all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken."

And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, "Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under." And they took

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[1] **Fire and water:* considered the most wonderful manifestations of the gods, in all ancient religions. We must remember that there was no knowledge of science in those days.

[2] I Kings 18:7–15, 16–40 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] **Mount Carmel:* Locate on the map. Probably an old sanctuary of Jehovah had existed there.

[4] **Asherah:* A nature goddess worshiped throughout the ancient world.

THE RIDGE OF MOUNT CARMEL, FROM THE NORTH

the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us." But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, "Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked."[1] And they cried aloud, and cut themselves[2] after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied[3] until the time of the offering of the evening oblation; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

And Elijah said unto all the people, "Come near unto me," and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of Jehovah came, saying, Israel shall be thy name. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Jehovah; and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would be sown with two seahs.[4] And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt-offering, and on the wood." And he said, "Do it the second time," and they did it the second time. And he said, "Do it the third time," and they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening oblation,[5] that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, "O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou,

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[1] * Note the irony of Elijah in his scorn of Baal, and his security in his belief that Jehovah would demonstrate not only his own superiority, but the fact that Baal was no god at all, or at least had no power in the land of Palestine.

[2] **Cut themselves:* in accordance with custom, in their attempts to secure the favor of the god.

[3] **Prophesied:* remained in the state of frenzy in which Baal was expected to speak through their persons.

[4] **Two seahs:* 1½ pecks of seed.

[5] **Evening oblation:* the customary sunset sacrifice.

Jehovah, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt-
60 offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, "Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God." And Elijah said unto them, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they took them;
65 and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Jehovah, the God of the Rain.[1]—In the test by fire, Jehovah had triumphed. Now would the rain come and add its testimony to the superior power of Jehovah, in the land where for three years prayers to Baal for relief had been unavailing? The faith of Elijah did not quail. Boldly he bade Ahab break his fast, because rain was about to come. Then we see the prophet retiring again to Mount Carmel, the scene of his recent victory, and bowing himself to the earth, with his head between his knees, addressing himself in an agony of appeal to Jehovah. Once and again, and many times, his messenger is sent to scan the sky, and at last the cloud appears. Quickly the word went to Ahab, "Make ready thy chariot and get thee down to Jezreel,[2] that the rain stop thee not." The storm came—rain in abundance, with thunder and lightning, the special manifestations of Jehovah's power. Elijah, out-distancing Ahab in his race to Jezreel, meets him in triumph at the city gate. Jehovah is vindicated. What is this to mean to Israel? is the unspoken demand of the prophets.

Elijah Strong in Defeat.—Jezebel, infuriated by the death of the priests of Baal, but fearing to kill Elijah, drove him from the land. Straight to the traditional home of Jehovah, Mount Horeb[3]

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[1] The water supply of Palestine depended entirely upon the rainfalls. The streams became dry for a large portion of the year if the rainy seasons were too short or if the amount of the rainfall was too scant. In ancient times famines were therefore common.

[2] *Jezreel:* Locate on map; at the head of a rich valley and commanding territory of great strategic value. It was the site of Ahab's summer palace.

[3] *Mount Horeb:* another designation of Mount Sinai, where Israel camped on the first stage of the journey from Egypt, and where Jehovah was supposed to have had his original dwelling-place.

(Sinai), he went, and there in a cave waited for some explanation of this seeming defeat, some word of reassurance from Jehovah, whom he had so nobly served. Standing upon the mountain side he was shaken by a storm which broke the rocks with its fury. Again an earthquake rent the side of the mountain, and fire followed in its wake, but it was no longer a message of the power of Jehovah over Nature which Elijah sought. Finally the revelation came.

> And Elijah went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And he said, "I have been very jealous for Jehovah the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."
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> And Jehovah said unto him, "Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael[1] to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room."

In the assurance that Jehovah holds sway over men as well as over nature Elijah finds his satisfaction, and bides his time.

Elijah, the Defender of the Rights of the People.—Fundamental in the essence of the Hebrew religion was the doctrine of individual rights. Ideals of justice between man and man had taken the shape of crude laws very early in Israel's history.[2] Custom had increased the strength and the adaptability of these laws. The kings, reigning by virtue of ability rather than blood succession, were of their own or the people's creation, and rebellion against tyranny meant sooner or later vengeance upon the reigning dynasty. Once more we find Elijah and Jezebel arrayed against each other in connection with the stern refusal of Naboth to sell his ancestral estate to King Ahab for a royal garden near the summer palace at Jezreel.

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[1] *Hazael, Jehu, Elisha:* the first promising a weakening in the Syrian kingdom the second, the restoration of the royal favor toward the prophets in Israel, the third, a continuation of the work of the prophets in a worthy representative.

[2] See Exod., chaps. 20–23, the oldest of the formal codes which have come down to us.

The Story of Naboth and His Vineyard[1, 2]

And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, "Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money." And Naboth said to Ahab, "Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, "I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers." And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

But Jezebel his wife came to him and said unto him, "Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?" And he said unto her, "Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard." And Jezebel his wife said unto him, "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, and that dwelt with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: and set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst curse God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him to death."

And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, according as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And the two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him; and the base fellows bare witness against him, even against Naboth, in

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[1] I Kings 21:1–21, 23, 24, 27–29 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] * In connection with the story of Naboth note his pride in the ancestral estate, the picture of the method of trying a case, the false witnesses, the death penalty, immediately executed according to custom in cases of blasphemy and treason.

the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth did curse God and the king." Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him to death with stones. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth is stoned, and is dead." And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwelleth in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to take possession of it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." And Ahab said to Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" And he answered, "I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will utterly sweep thee away and will cut off from Ahab every man-child. And of Jezebel also spake Jehovah, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the birds of the heavens eat."[1]

And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.[2] And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

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[1] *Jezebel:* Jezebel was the daughter of the priest-king of Tyre. Her religious fanaticism alone, therefore, and the extremes to which she resorted in defense of her religion would not have condemned her in the eyes of posterity. Her heartless treatment of Naboth, however, reveals a character treacherous and cruel, and well deserving of her fate.

[2] *Note the usual signs of mourning, the rending of the garments, the wearing of sackcloth, a coarse cloth rough and painful to the skin. The expression "went softly" graphically expresses the quietness and timidity of Ahab's later days, shadowed by the curse of Elijah and the fear of Jehovah's vengeance.

True and False Prophets.—The curse of Elijah mitigated by the repentance of Ahab finds its first fulfilment in the mind of the prophetic writer in the story of the death of Ahab. The interest of the story for us is in the light which it throws upon prophecy as a profession, in the sense in which the ministry is today a profession. In it we see that many prophets, speaking in all sincerity, had neither the statesman-like vision which enabled them to anticipate political events truly, nor the spiritual insight to interpret the character and will of Jehovah. Neither had they the courage and persistence to enable them to brave personal dangers, even risking life, if need be, in speaking the fateful messages of Jehovah to the monarchs of their time. It was not a difference in profession, but in intellect and character, which distinguished the so-called false prophet from the true one.

Micaiah and the False Prophets[1]

And they continued three years[2] without war between Syria and Israel. And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down[3] to Ahab the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said unto his servants, "Know ye that Ramoth-gilead[4] is ours, and we are still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?" And he said unto Jehoshaphat, "Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead?" And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses."

And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, "Inquire first, I pray thee, for the word of Jehovah." Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets[5] together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, "Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?" And they said, "Go up; for the Lord will deliver it into

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[1] I Kings 22: 1–37 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] **Three years without war:* so unusual as to demand comment.

[3] **Came down:* the biblical writers always speak of coming down from and going up to Jerusalem, possibly because of its location on the highest land in the Southern Kingdom.

[4] **Ramoth Gilead:* one of the Israelitish cities which had been taken by Syria.

[5] **Prophets:* of Jehovah, not Baal, showing the restoration to favor of a large body of prophets of Jehovah.

the hand of the king." But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we may inquire of him?" And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of Jehovah, Micaiah the son of Imlah: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so." Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, "Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imlah." Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in their robes, in an open place[1] at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron,[2] and said, "Thus saith Jehovah, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until they be consumed." And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper; for Jehovah will deliver it into the hand of the king."

And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, "Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak thou good." And Micaiah said, "As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak." And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" And he answered him, "Go up and prosper; and Jehovah will deliver it into the hand of the king." And the king said unto him, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou speak unto me nothing but the truth in the name of Jehovah?" And he said, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and Jehovah said, These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace." And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell thee that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah: I saw Jehovah sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And Jehovah said, Who shall entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner;

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[1] **An open place:* an interesting picture of the ancient custom of transacting business at the city gate.

[2] **Horns of iron:* An object-lesson with which to impress his message.

and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before Jehovah, and said, I will entice him. And Jehovah said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt entice him, and shalt prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, Jehovah hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets; and Jehovah hath spoken evil concerning thee."

Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek and said, "Which way went the Spirit of Jehovah from me to speak unto thee?"

And Micaiah said, "Behold, thou shalt see on that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself." And the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; and say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace." And Micaiah said, "If thou return at all in peace, Jehovah hath not spoken by me." And he said, "Hear, ye peoples, all of you."

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself, and go into the battle; but put thou on thy robes."[1] And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty and two captains of his chariots, saying, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel." And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, "Surely it is the king of Israel"; and they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. And a certain man drew his bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the armor: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, "Turn thy hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am sore wounded." And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even;

[1] **In disguise:* Note the care with which Ahab guarded against the fulfilment of the word of Micaiah.

and the blood ran out of the wound into the bottom of the chariot. And there went a cry throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, "Every man to his city, and every man to his country."

So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.

The Extinction of Phoenician Baalism.—But great as was the work of Elijah, the hold of the worship of the Phoenician Baal upon the court and upon the people was greater. The fight between Baal worship and the prophets persisted for decades. Syrian wars devastated the country, and chief among the advisers of the king was Elisha, the successor of Elijah. A cool-headed statesman, in the conquest of Syria he saw the greatest hope of the extermination of foreign worship. But Syria grew stronger. Disappointed in his hopes, Elisha instigated the bloodiest revolution of Hebrew history, placing upon the throne for this purpose Jehu, one of the bodyguard of Ahab, who had doubtless listened to the threats of Elijah against the house of Ahab.[1] In this revolution Jezebel perished. Besides the reigning kings of Israel and Judah[2] who were together at the time, seventy sons and grandsons of Ahab were slain, as well as all the friends and adherents of the royal family. Even visiting relatives from the house of Judah were included in the slaughter.

It may be that Elijah in the prime of his power would have found higher and more convincing proof of Jehovah's right to the undivided loyalty of Israel than this bloodthirsty massacre, but it serves to show the prophet, as the spokesman of Jehovah, still supreme in Israel's political as well as her religious life, and foreign Baalism forever stamped out as a rival of the religion of Jehovah.

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[1] The story of the revolution of Jehu is recorded in II Kings, chap. 9 and 10: 1–28. The whole account should be read in order to get a vivid impression of the terrible process of this last step in the extinction of Phoenician Baalism in northern Israel.

[2] *King of Judah:* Ahaziah, the grandnephew of King Ahab. A sister of Ahab had been married to the king of southern Israel in a period of temporary peace. *King of Israel:* Joram, son of Ahab.

The Contribution of Elijah and His Immediate Successors.[1]— What was the contribution of Jehovah's prophets to the religion of the Hebrews in the century which we have just considered? To Elijah and his followers came the conviction that upon the preservation of the religion of Jehovah depended the life of the state. Coupled with this discerning statesmanship was a pure patriotism which kept the prophets faithfully banded together through persecution and almost extinction. Beyond and above this was a religious zeal for Jehovah which took no account of personal danger or private gain, and could brook no divided allegiance from his people. The blood of the prophets in this crusade was not less heroically or generously shed than that of the Christian martyrs under the persecutions of Rome.

So in this generation was passed on to Israel of the succeeding centuries the conception of a God whose followers might pay homage to no other; and for one more step in the progress toward our belief in God as the creator and ruler of the universe we are indebted to the prophets.

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[1] Intertwined with the stories which relate Elijah and Elisha to the great religious and political movements of their day are many stories of wonderful and sometimes miraculous events which we must accept as the contribution of the people, many of them perhaps living at a much later time. In reading these stories which are found in the Books of Kings it is not worth while to try to explain them upon any rational basis. It is better to accept them just as they are, trivial or grave, as testifying to the reverence in which these great men were held, and the fact that in the estimation of the people nothing was impossible to them as representatives of the power of Jehovah.

CHAPTER V

THE PROPHETS CREATING A LITERATURE

Adjustment to New Conditions.—In carrying out modern reform movements in state or community various methods of educating public opinion are employed. The training of leaders, speeches through which these leaders appeal directly to the people, and sermons from the pulpit are some of the important agencies. But in some respects more potent than any of these are the printed messages which by sound logic or by attractive form persuade large numbers of persons who cannot be reached by popular addresses. In the early days in Israel the prophets usually presented their messages in person, and in many cases to individuals who were the leaders of a blindly following constituency.[1] As the nation developed, larger groups of people became knit together in social and industrial activities. Constant contact with the greater nations developed intellectual independence and ability to solve the problems of state and religion. The people could no longer be wholly led by their rulers.

The prophets, pre-eminently men who could read the signs of the times, were not slow in adjusting their methods to changing conditions. They saw clearly that neither the welfare of the state nor the purity of the national religion could permanently be preserved except by the cultivation of a spirit of loyalty in the hearts of the people at large. Shut out at times from greater activities by persecution and royal disfavor, as in the period coincident with and following Elijah, they bent themselves to the task of preparing a literature which should give permanency and wider influence to their teachings.

The prophets were not writers of fiction or of philosophy, nor were they mere sermonizers. Certain fundamental beliefs they had already expressed. Jehovah was the one and only god of the

[1] Recall the appearances of Samuel to Saul, and the visits of Nathan the prophet to David, II Sam. 12: 1–15; Ahijah to Jeroboam, I Kings 11: 26–40. Recall also the appearances of Elijah to Ahab.

Hebrew people. He demanded their exclusive and sincere worship. His favor could not be bought with external gifts. More than this, he took an active interest in the national life, having directed it from the earliest times. Perfect obedience to his will as expressed by the prophets was therefore necessary to secure his approval. For such obedience his rewards were lavish—prosperity, long life, abundant increase in flocks and family—and for disobedience his punishments were equally swift and sure. Since Jehovah was not only superior to the gods of the other nations, if such existed, but vitally different in character, the prophets dimly saw his people also as unique and destined to some great future, for which they must be kept apart from the rest of the world, not only as a nation, but as a race, with blood uncontaminated by that of other peoples. Such were some of the fundamental ideas of the prophets of this time. To cultivate such beliefs among the people in the surest and most convincing way, was their steadfast purpose.

The Prophets and the National Traditions.—The Hebrew people, in common with all ancient nations, possessed a large body of oral traditions—stories of the origin of the world, of man, of varied language, of the beginnings of civilization, stories of the early ancestors of their race, and their settlement in the land of Canaan. Doubtless in different sections of the country there existed different versions of the stories of the same great events. We can trace in our Old Testament two distinct cycles of stories which grew up, one in the north and one in the south, each possessing local color given to it by the sympathies of the story-teller and his audience,

Everyone knows that a truth embodied in a story strikes the heart, lingers longer in the memory, and does its work more surely than the same truth baldly stated. In their endeavor to teach the people the prophets turned to the ancient stories and the traditional history of their people. First in Judah, and perhaps a half-century later in more turbulent Israel, there came into existence under the hands of the prophets continuous stories of the nation and its God. These two narratives were later woven together by other writers or groups of writers and appear in the first five books of our Old Testament, so intertwined that only experts, judging from language, spirit, historical allusions, and literary style can separate

them.[1] Having for their aim instruction in religion, the prophets selected only such material as suited their purpose, and treated even that in such as way as to present most strongly the lesson which they wished to impress. The stories which follow emphasize one or another of the great religious teachings of the prophets of this period. Space permits the presentation of only a few of these stories, many of which are full of interest and religious significance.

Although familiar to most readers of the Old Testament, these stories take on a new and fresh value when regarded from the point of view of prophetic literature.

The Story of the Beginning of Sin[2]

The tradition of a first man and a first woman was common to all Semitic nations. In the hands of the prophets it is used to illustrate and to define sin as disobedience to Jehovah, who inflicts suffering as a punishment. Thus, in the thought of the Hebrews, all suffering came to be regarded as punishment for wrong doing.

> [3]In the day that Jehovah made earth and heaven, no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for Jehovah had not caused it to rain upon the earth; and there was not a man to till the ground; but

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[1] The task of separating these early documents from a third which is much later in its origin, and from editorial comments and revisions which have been incorporated in the text, has been the task of scholars for twenty-five years or more. Of course all scholars do not agree in the exact details of results obtained, but there is agreement upon the general characteristics of the different main pieces of literature combined in the first five books of the Old Testament, generally called the Pentateuch. In the stories which are presented in this chapter the later material has been omitted, and so far as possible only selections from the work of the prophets of the period which we have just studied included.

[2] Gen. 2: 4—3: 24, with omission of portions said to have come from later writers (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] * This story, as we should expect, takes no account of science. The work of the geologists, of chemists, of physicists, and of astronomers, from whom we have learned so much of the history of the making of the earth and of its relation to other bodies, was yet unknown. At the time this story was current the earth was regarded as flat, with a solid blue dome, the sky, overarching it. The sun was supposed to travel across the sky daily, and the moon and stars in their seasons. Where these heavenly bodies were when not visible was a profound mystery. Doubtless the prophet and his predecessors as well as his successors for many generations believed this story to give the

there used to go up a mist from the earth, that watered the whole face of the ground. And Jehovah formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And Jehovah planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made Jehovah to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life[1] also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.[2] And Jehovah commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

And Jehovah said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet[3] for him." And out of the ground Jehovah formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field; but for man there was not

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history of the origin of man and woman, but not for this purpose did the prophet put into written form a story which was already known to every one of his people. To him the important thing was the *disobedience* of the man and woman. He observed all about him disobedience to the commands of Jehovah. With true spiritual insight he saw that since time began man had sinned, and he argues that the suffering which he sees, labor, and pain, and sorrow, are the result of sin. How far wrong was he? Does this story reflect an attitude toward work which we do not share today, but which was not strange in an ancient oriental people, when a system of slavery existed throughout the world? Does it also show a true analysis of the steps in any sinful act—the prohibition, the desire, the temptation to act, the result or punishment? Remember that this story was current before the days of philosophy or psychology.

[1] **The tree of life:* a tree whose fruit would render those who ate it immortal.

[2] **The tree of the knowledge of good and evil:* a tree which enabled those who ate of its fruit to become wise. Possibly in the original story which the prophet used the fruit of the tree was in itself fatal to human life. The prophet transfers the emphasis to the result of the act of disobedience. Forbidden fruit is a favorite feature of folk-lore. See the legend of the tree with the golden apples in the garden of the daughters of Hesperus, and the story of Persephone who ate a portion of a prohibited pomegranate and was on that account obliged to sojourn in the lower regions for a third of each year. A story somewhat similar to the Hebrew story was found in the Babylonian literature. From the point of view of religious teaching, however, all these stories except that of the Hebrews were of little value.

[3] **A help meet:* a suitable companion or fellow-worker.

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found a help meet for him. And Jehovah caused a deep sleep[1] to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: and the rib, which Jehovah had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Now the serpent[2] was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah had made. And he said unto the woman, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" And the woman said unto the serpent, "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." And the serpent said unto the woman, "Ye shall surely not die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be like gods,[3] knowing good and evil." And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of Jehovah walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah amongst the trees of the garden.

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[1] **Sleep:* The word used for sleep here signifies a trance or supernatural slumber.

[2] **The serpent:* This was one of the traditions which, to ancient peoples, presented a reason why the serpent, so common in oriental countries, traveled on the ground, without apparent means of locomotion, instead of upright. To the ancients there was nothing marvelous in animals talking in a primitive world, or in Jehovah walking and talking as a man. In the mind of the prophet the natural antagonism between the serpent and mankind was translated into a symbol of the antagonism between good and evil, a strife in which he however saw good eventually prevailing.

[3] *Like gods:* Among many ancient peoples there was a belief that the gods were jealous of man and dreaded his attainment to like knowledge with themselves. It is possible that in this expression we have a reflection of this old belief. It is interesting to note here that the attainment of spiritual likeness to God is the keynote of our modern religion.

And Jehovah called unto the man, and said unto him, "Where art thou?" And he said, "I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." And he said, "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" And the man said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." And Jehovah said unto the woman, "What is this thou hast done?" And the woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." And Jehovah said unto the serpent, "Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Unto the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." And unto Adam he said, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Therefore Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. And the man called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. And Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins, and clothed them.

And Jehovah God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil," and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever, he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim,[1] and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

The story of the great Flood, Genesis, chaps. 6–9, emphasizes, on the other hand, the rewards of obedience.

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[1] **Cherubim:* winged creatures, possibly the man-headed bulls, which were familiar figures in Assyria.

AN ANCIENT TREE NEAR HEBRON, TRADITIONALLY NAMED "ABRAHAM'S

The Call of Abram[1]

The following story voices the hope of the prophets for a great future for Israel.

Now Jehovah[2,3] said unto Abram, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and all the families of the earth shall be blessed through thee." So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem,[4] unto the Oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land," and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched

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[1] Gen. 12:1–8 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] *We must consider Abram in this story not as a simple individual, but as the chief of the tribes represented by himself and Lot. This is therefore the record of the migration of tribes, a large company moving slowly and by successive stages, often lingering long in a section where pasturage was good, for they doubtless moved with them vast flocks and herds, carrying on the business of life as they went, buying, selling, and trading with the people along their route. In chap. 14 Abram appears as the leader of 318 fighting men, *born in his house.* This would imply a following of many hundred persons.

[3] * Tradition places the early home of the Abrahamic tribes in Ur of the Chaldees, a spot which is not definitely located. Two locations have been suggested, one in the north and the other in the south of the country bordering upon the Euphrates River. Haran, which is mentioned in the later account of Gen. 11:32 as one of the stages of the journey, is easily located on the map. Among shepherd peoples there was always a tendency to leave the well-settled communities and to move on toward better pasture lands.

[4] **The place of Shechem:* possibly a spot where an ancient sanctuary existed. The Oak of Moreh was probably a sacred tree such as is often mentioned in the Old Testament in connection with a sanctuary. The name may signify the Oak of the Soothsayer, and the tree was possibly the seat of an oracle.

his tent, having Beth-el[1] on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah.

Jehovah Forbidding Human Sacrifice[2]

Another story associated with Abraham, the great ancestor of the Hebrews, is inserted here not only because of its purpose, to depict the wonderful character of the forerunner of the race and to arraign the barbarous custom of human sacrifice, resorted to in Israel in great emergencies, and common among the surrounding nations, but also because of the perfection of the story as such.

And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, "Abraham"; and he said, "Here am I." And he said, "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah;[3] and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." [4]And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young

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[1] **Bethel:* This word means the House of God. By tradition it was associated with Jacob and his dream. This story does not mean that the name of the place was Bethel at the time when Abram settled there. In 28:19, we see that the old name of the place was Luz. Its sacred name seems to have been given by the Israelites themselves.

[2] Gen. 22:1–19 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] *The land of Moriah:* Considerable trouble has been taken to locate the spot where this offering was intended to take place. In the innermost part of the mosque in Jerusalem which stands upon the supposed site of the ancient Temple of Solomon is a great stone upon which the offerings of the Hebrews were made for centuries. Tradition has said that this stone marked the spot where Isaac was placed upon the altar, but in the time of Abraham Jerusalem was already a city, and there is no suggestion in the story that Abraham went to a city to make his offering. We are quite in the dark as to the facts, however, and speculation is useless.

[4] Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, while testifying strongly to his faith in Jehovah, was not unique. Such sacrifices were a familiar fact to him even among his immediate neighbors, especially as a last resort in extreme distress or fanaticism. In II Kings 3: 27, it is related of the king of Moab that he offered his son for a burnt-offering upon the city wall, when under siege. Judg. 11:39 suggests that the daughter of Jephthah suffered the same fate. Two centuries later we find Ahaz of Judea offering his son, "in accordance with the abominations of the heathen," II Kings 16: 3. Doubtless this story stood for centuries as the classic denunciation of the prophets against the practice. That it was a favorite story and was retold and rewritten numberless times is apparent in the perfection of the story. Not a detail is omitted, not a non-essential included, and the story moves on from start to finish smoothly and with just the right regard for climax. An effort to improve it will convince one of this.

men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, "Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire[1] and the knife; and they went both of them together.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, "My father": and he said, "Here am I, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" And Abraham said, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering, my son": so they went both of them together.

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of Jehovah called unto him out of heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham": and he said, "Here am I." And he said, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided. And the angel of Jehovah called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, "By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." So Abraham returned unto his young

[1] *The fire:* Kindling a fire would be difficult, so Abraham takes with him glowing embers. It was sometimes customary to kindle the sacrifice with some ceremonial fire. Perhaps this was fire from some sacred place, or kindled in some way deemed sacred.

men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

The Wooing of Isaac and Rebecca[1]

The romantic story of Abraham's care in finding a wife for Isaac from among his own kinsfolk presents in a most attractive way a precedent for preserving the blood of the nation from corruption through intermarriage with foreigners, a condition which seemed to the prophets essential to the preservation of both state and religion.

And Abraham[2] was old, and well stricken in age: and Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his servant, the elder of his house, that ruled over all that he had, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that thou wilt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac." And the servant said unto him, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?" And Abraham said unto him, "Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. Jehovah, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house, and from the land of my nativity, and who spake unto me, and who sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he will send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife for my son from thence. And if the woman be not willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my

[1] Gen. 24: 1–67 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] * Note the interesting features of this story, the custom of seeking a wife from some distant but related tribe, the trusty slave, probably of as good blood and breeding as his master, the women at the common well and their service to the strangers, the formalities of the betrothal, the marriage arranged entirely with the members of the bride's family, the immediate journey of the betrothed to her prospective husband, the meeting, and the installing of the bride. It is worth while to dwell upon this picture of primitive oriental life until the feeling of the simplicity and childlike spirit of it impresses itself upon the mind, and reveals to us the affection with which such a story would be passed on from generation to generation. This story occupies the longest chapter in the Book of Genesis and is illustrative of the importance attached by these prophetic writers to the necessity of preserving the Israelitish race from mixture with other peoples.

oath; only thou shalt not bring my son thither again." And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning this matter.

And the servant took ten camels, of the camels of his master, and departed, having all goodly things of his master's in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made the camels to kneel down without the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time that women go out to draw water. And he said, "O Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, send me, I pray thee, good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the fountain of water; and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master." And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the fountain, and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Give me to drink, I pray thee, a little water from thy pitcher." And she said, "Drink, my lord," and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said "I will draw for thy camels also, until they have done drinking." And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw and drew for all his camels. And the man looked stedfastly on her, holding his peace, to know whether Jehovah had made his journey prosperous or not. And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands, of ten shekels weight of gold, and said, "Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee. Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?" And she said unto him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bare unto Nahor." She said moreover unto him, "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in." And the man

bowed his head, and worshipped Jehovah. And he said, "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, who hath not forsaken his lovingkindness and his truth toward my master: as for me, Jehovah hath led me in the way to the house of my master's brethren."

And the damsel ran, and told her mother's house according to these words. And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the fountain. And it came to pass, when he saw the ring, and the bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he was standing by the camels at the fountain. And he said, "Come in, thou blessed of Jehovah; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels." And the man came into the house, and he ungirded the camels; and he gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men that were with him. And there was set food before him to eat: but he said, "I will not eat, until I have told mine errand." And he said, "Speak on." And he said, "I am Abraham's servant.[1] And Jehovah hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men-servants and maid-servants, and camels and asses. And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath. And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son. And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. And he said unto me, Jehovah, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house: then shalt thou be clear from my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give her not to thee, thou shalt be clear from my oath. And I came this day unto the fountain, and said, O Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go: behold, I am standing by the foun-

[1] *I am Abraham's servant:* According to Arab etiquette the host does not ask the name of his guest until he has eaten of his food, lest a blood feud should be found to exist between the tribes to which they belong. After the guest has partaken of food he is safe with his host.

tain of water; and let it come to pass, that the maiden that cometh forth to draw, to whom I shall say, Give me, I pray thee, a little water from thy pitcher to drink; and she shall say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom Jehovah hath appointed for my master's son. And before I had done speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the fountain, and drew: and I said unto her, Let me drink I pray thee. And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also. And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the ring upon her nose, and the bracelets upon her hands. And I bowed my head, and worshipped Jehovah, and blessed Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter for his son. And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left."

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing proceedeth from Jehovah: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as Jehovah hath spoken." And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself down to the earth unto Jehovah. And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.[1] And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, "Send me away unto my master." And her brother and her mother said, "Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go." And he said unto them, "Hinder me not, seeing Jehovah hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master." And they said, "We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth." And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her,

[1] *Precious things:* The price of a bride paid to her family.

"Our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of ten thousands,
and let thy seed possess the gate of those that hate them."

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. And Isaac came from the way of Beer-lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the land of the South. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, there were camels coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted from the camel.[1] And she said unto the servant, "What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?" And the servant said, "It is my master," and she took her veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his father's[2] death.

The Story of the Exodus From Egypt[3]

There was one event so firmly imbedded in the memory of tribal Israel that the impression of it deepened rather than diminished as the nation grew to greater self-consciousness. That was the fact that for a period large numbers of her people had been enslaved in Egypt, and under the leadership of Moses directed by Jehovah

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[1] *Lighted from the camel:* Rebecca, suspecting that the man whom she sees is her betrothed husband, alights from her camel in order that she may veil herself after the eastern custom and show him all due respect. The bridegroom cannot see the face of the bride until after the wedding.

[2] Lines 159, 160. These lines read in the Old Testament his "mother's" death. Some authorities prefer to think that the word has been altered and that it was the death of his father which Isaac mourned at this time, Sarah having been dead many years.

[3] * There is scarcely a prophet or a poet in all Hebrew literature who does not allude to the Exodus from Egypt, and upon it base his faith in the love and care of Jehovah. The stories of the event as found in the several different documents which are interwoven in our Old Testament were so extensive as to carry the story through a number of chapters in the Book of Exodus. The story which we give omits, however, much of the material, giving only the last great scourge with which it was said Jehovah afflicted the people of Egypt, and the earliest accounts of the succeeding events. No one can fully appreciate the story who does not read also the succeeding chapters of Exodus to the 20th chapter, so as to get the story of the early days in the wilderness, and the scenes at Mount Sinai. The full appreciation of the character of Moses as here portrayed can best be gained in a survey of the events of the trying after-days of the Exodus.

had made their escape to the wilderness, from which after many years of wandering they had invaded Canaan. Around this event clustered many traditions. For generations the story of this marvelous escape was used by the prophets in allusion and direct narrative, to impress upon the people the victorious power of Jehovah over the gods of so mighty a nation as Egypt. The story of the event is prefaced in the Old Testament by many chapters recording the plagues with which Jehovah vexed the people of Egypt, in order to compel them to let his people go free. The last and most convincing of these scourges opens the selection which we present.

And Pharaoh [1]called unto Moses, and said, "Go ye, serve Jehovah; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed:[2] let your little ones also go with you." And Moses said, "Thou must also give into our hand sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto Jehovah our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve Jehovah our God; and we know not with what we must serve Jehovah, until we come thither." And Pharaoh said unto him, "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die." And Moses said, "Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face again no more." And Moses said, "Thus saith Jehovah, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there hath not been nor shall be any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that Jehovah doth make a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

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[1] The oldest accounts selected from Exod., chaps. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] **Let your flocks and your herds be stayed:* as a pledge of their return, to which the Israelites respond that they must take all their cattle, for they do not know what Jehovah's requirements in the way of sacrifice will be. Note that the Hebrews were not mere slaves, but owners of cattle and property. This is really an emigration.

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, "Draw out, and take you lambs according to your families, and kill. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house. For Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, Jehovah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

And it came to pass at midnight, that Jehovah smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house[1] where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, "Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve Jehovah, as ye have said. Take both your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also." And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, to send them out of the land in haste; for they said, "We are all dead men." And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and Jehovah gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. And they despoiled the Egyptians.

And the children of Israel journeyed about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children. And a mixed multitude[2] went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt,

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[1] *Not a house:* In the large households of the East there would not be likely to be a house in which there was not one firstborn.

[2] **Mixed multitude:* probably not only Hebrews, men, women, and children, but hangers-on of other blood, slaves, and others who, dissatisfied in Egypt, would embrace this opportunity to go out into a new life.

and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victuals. And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night: the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people.[1]

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, "Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt," but God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea: and the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt.[2] And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you." And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And it was told the king of Egypt that the people were fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was changed towards the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over all of them. And he pursued after the children of Israel.

And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto Jehovah. And they said unto Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us to bring us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we spake unto thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." And Moses said unto the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. Jehovah will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

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[1] **Pillar of cloud; pillar of fire:* Smoke and flame were familiar accompaniments of Jehovah's manifestations.

[2] **Red Sea:* Study the map and note the direction of the flight.

And Jehovah said unto Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it."

And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud removed from before them, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one came not near the other all the night.

And Jehovah caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea. And it came to pass in the morning watch, that Jehovah looked forth upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians. And he bound their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians."

And the Egyptians fled against it; and Jehovah overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. There remained not so much as one of them. Thus Jehovah saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw the great work which Jehovah did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared Jehovah: and they believed in Jehovah, and in his servant Moses.

This story is incomplete without the fragment of song for generations associated with it.

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto Jehovah, and spake, saying,

"I will sing unto Jehovah, for he hath
triumphed gloriously:
The horse and his rider hath he thrown
into the sea."

A Great Task.—While we have no means of identifying the work of any particular prophet in this new realm of literature we see in the whole movement that the prophets were seizing every available means with which to promote their ideals: that with unerring judgment they chose the material which would make the strongest appeal to national pride and to fidelity to Jehovah, and that in the

use of this material they freely recast the stories to suit their own purposes, rejecting that for which they had no use, or using it but to condemn, and saturating the whole with their own conceptions of Jehovah and their highest ideals of national and religious life.

To us who see the printed page issued by millions from the daily press the magnitude of the task of creating literature, and of circulating it, two thousand years before the invention of the printing press, in an age when implements were of the crudest, and in a country where the scribal class had not yet developed, is difficult to comprehend. Only the imagination can enable us to appreciate it and to understand the labor of brain and hand involved, as well as the spiritual insight manifested in the activities of the loyal and energetic prophets in the period following Elijah and Elisha. To them we owe the beginning of the literature of the Hebrew people and a large section of the Old Testament.

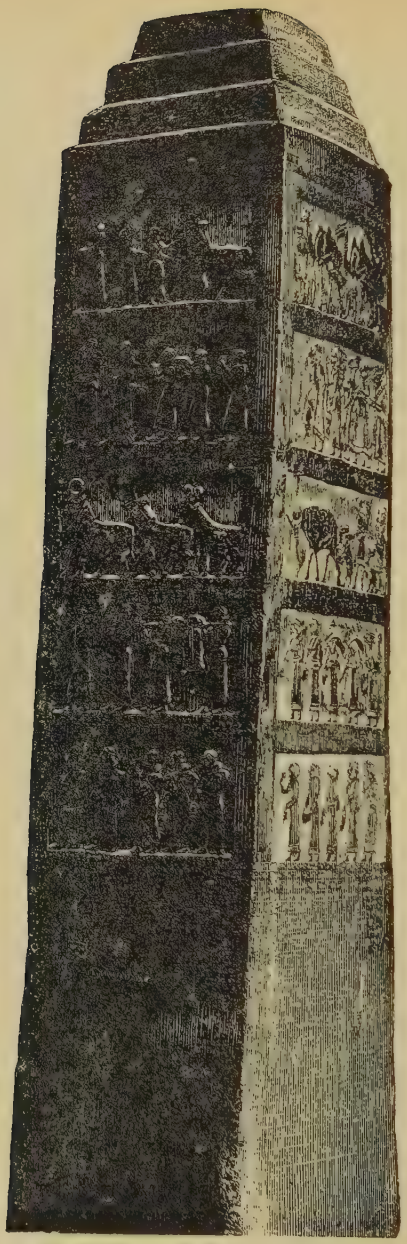
CHAPTER VI

ISRAEL AND HER FOREIGN RELATIONSHIPS FROM 876–722 B.C.

Before taking up the specific work of another prophet it will be necessary to make a survey of the foreign relationships of Israel during a period extending over a century and a half, a part of which we have already covered, and the remainder of which we must anticipate in order to gain a background for the following chapters. The work of the prophets is so wrapped up in the circumstances attending these relationships that one must be clearly understood in order that the other may be correctly interpreted. We must not lose sight of the fact that each prophet spoke primarily to the men of his own day and his own region.

Upon the death of Ahab at Ramoth Gilead, a period of disaster set in for northern Israel. Ahab's son Joram, after a troubled reign of twelve years, was conspired against and slain by Jehu, a captain in his army. Jehu at once assumed the throne, and sought to make himself secure by a wholesale slaughter of the house of Ahab. The nation was thus robbed of the very leaders who had helped to make it great, and its interests fell into the hands of usurpers who were both murderers and traitors.

Thus weakened at home and torn by conflicting parties, Israel's misery was accentuated by attacks from external foes. Damascus, her neighbor on the north, under the aggressive leadership of King Hazael, invaded Israel again and again, and found her an easy prey during the latter part of the reign of Jehu, and all the days of his son Jehoahaz. The state of weakness to which Israel was reduced is indicated by the following statements from the Second Book of Kings: "For he left not to Jehoahaz of the people save fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen: for the king of Syria destroyed them and made them like the dust of the threshing. . . . . For Jehovah saw the affliction of Israel that it was very bitter: for there was none shut up or left at large, neither was there any helper for Israel."



THE SHALMANESER OBELISK

Containing an inscription of Shalmaneser II,
King of Assyria

In addition to this we learn from the black obelisk inscription of Shalmaneser II of Assyria that Jehu was forced to pay tribute to Assyria. This annual tax was a heavy drain upon the resources of the almost exhausted country. Relief came however in the days of Joash, the successor of Jehoahaz, and of his son Jeroboam II. The source of the deliverance was Assyria herself. This great empire could be satisfied with nothing less than dominion over the whole civilized world. The mountains of Elam and Persia shut her in on the east, and her natural lines of expansion lay along the river valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates toward the northwest and the west. In these directions she was constantly pushing. Israel's first contact with her was in the reign of Ahab. At that time Assyria's encroachments upon the smaller states of western Asia had become so pressing as to make these states recognize that their only safety lay in a united effort to turn back the hosts of Assyria. Consequently a coalition of forces was accomplished and a great contest was waged against her at Karkar in 854 B.C., the record of which is preserved in an Assyrian inscription. Ahab of Israel was one of the leading spirits in this enterprise. The result was apparently indecisive. But Assyria did not return to the attack for five years. Meantime the coalition had fallen to pieces, and its members were fighting among themselves. Damascus in Syria, and Israel became deadly enemies and waged war upon one another during the entire reign of Ahab. Damascus would undoubtedly have completely overcome Israel at this time had it not been for the fact that Assyria took advantage of this dissension among the allies to renew the attack upon the west. Four successive campaigns at intervals of a few years were made by Shalmaneser II against Damascus, and these so crippled the latter that Ahab of Israel was able to hold his own in the otherwise unequal contest between Israel and Damascus. But upon the death of Shalmaneser Assyria suffered a temporary decline in power, and Damascus was freed from her attacks for a period of over thirty years. Damascus took advantage of this opportunity to renew hostilities with Israel, and the lamentable condition of Israel in the days of Jehu and Jehoahaz was the result.

But an energetic monarch, Adad-Nirari III (812–783 B.C.) once more ascended the throne of Assyria. One of his first steps was the restoration of Assyria's power in the west, and a series of campaigns against Damascus reduced her to submission and enabled Israel under Joash to free herself from that domination. Then set in a period of almost unexampled prosperity for Israel. Left free to develop her own resources, she rapidly attained a position of power and influence unknown since the days of David and Solomon. Her territory is said to have extended from the upper end of the Dead Sea in the south to the Pass of Hamath in the north. Wealth accumulated rapidly in the hands of the nobles, as may be learned by reference to the speeches of the prophet Amos, whose activity falls in the days of Jeroboam II, and whose prophecies we shall study in the next chapter. But the luxury and materialism accompanying increasing prosperity blinded the eyes of the rich to the rights of the poor. The long wars with Damascus, with the heavy financial burdens which they had entailed, had as always fallen heaviest upon the shoulders of the poorer classes. The distress of that period had left them largely at the mercy of those who had wealth, and the latter were not hesitating to grind the faces of the poor, or, as Amos phrases it, "to trample the head of the poor to the dust of the earth."

With the passing of Jeroboam II northern Israel hastened rapidly toward its doom. Murder and anarchy displaced law and order. King followed king upon the throne in quick succession. Zechariah after reigning six months was murdered by Shallum, who in turn after a month gave place to his murderer Menahem. The latter held the throne for ten years, but was obliged to pay an enormous tribute to Assyria in order to save his throne and country. For under one of the greatest of its kings, Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 B.C.), Assyria was again pushing her way southward toward Egypt. These two aspirants for world power were preparing to match forces one against the other. The possession of Syria and Palestine, as the bridge connecting Assyria and Egypt, was of immense strategic importance to the contestants. Tiglath-pileser was the first of the two to set foot upon the bridge.

JEHU'S TRIBUTE TO SHALMANESER II

These two reliefs from the Shalmaneser Obelisk represent Israelites bringing tribute to the Assyrian King

Meantime the smaller states of the west were becoming restive under the heavy yoke of Assyria. As in the days of Ahab, so once again they strove to form a coalition against her. Damascus under Remaliah, and Samaria under Pekah sought the cöoperation of Judah, which was refused. Hence they attacked Jerusalem and strove to force her into compliance with their plans. Ahaz, her king, sent to Tiglath-pileser for succor, thereby professing himself a vassal of Assyria. Tiglath-pileser was not slow to avail himself of this opportunity and hastened to the west. Damascus was subdued and destroyed. Northern Israel was invaded and deprived of all her territory east of the Jordan, and although she paid a heavy tribute to Assyria, a large share of her population was deported to Assyria (734 B.C.). In connection with these events Pekah, whose actions had brought on the Assyrian invasion, was slain by Hoshea, who thereupon seized the throne for himself. He held it, however, as a vassal of Assyria, paying a heavy annual tribute. This was irksome to the freedom-loving Israelites, and they lent a ready ear to So, king of Egypt, who encouraged them to revolt. Relying upon the support of this inveterate and powerful enemy of Assyria they withheld their annual tribute, thus announcing the fact of their revolt against their overlord. The challenge was at once accepted by the Assyrians and an army was sent to reduce Samaria to submission. In this time of need Egypt proved herself unreliable. She furnished no aid, notwithstanding that she had instigated Israel to revolt, and that it was in reality her battle that was being fought by Israel. Hence after a desperate siege, extending through three long years, Samaria fell (722 B.C.), and the kingdom of Israel came to an end, being incorporated as a province in the great empire of Assyria.

The internal condition of Israel during the troubled years from the death of Jeroboam II to the deportation under Tiglath-pileser in 734 B.C. is reflected for us in the writings of Hosea, a prophet of this period. He like Amos saw that the sins of Israel were exceedingly great and merited punishment from Jehovah. Both Amos and Hosea saw the shadow of Assyria looming larger and larger upon the horizon and were not slow to interpret the coming disaster

as an expression of Jehovah's wrath against his wicked people. At a time when their fellow-countrymen were losing faith in Jehovah and were ready to transfer their allegiance to the victorious gods of Assyria, Amos and Hosea insisted that the national disasters were but further proofs of the righteousness, justice, and power of Jehovah, from whose care and protection the nation was separating itself by its own misdeeds. But we must not too greatly anticipate the story of the work of these two men.

CHAPTER VII

AMOS, THE PROPHET OF DOOM

Our study of the preceding chapter has shown us with what perils the political life of Israel and Judah was menaced in the period between 780 and 745 B.C. In order to appreciate most fully the work of the prophets of this period we must place ourselves at its beginning, and as if unaware of the fate which actually met Israel look forward with the differing eyes of people and prophet.

By way of review let us recall that although in the period from Jehu to Jeroboam II,[1] Israel had once, and probably oftener, paid tribute to Assyria, she regarded the greater nation as her ally against nearer foes, the Syrians, and not yet as the all-devouring monster which later experience revealed. Jeroboam had indeed, under the protection of Assyria, been able to reclaim much of the territory which had been taken from Israel by the Syrians, and now reigned over a kingdom little less in extent than that of his ideal predecessor David. For during part of this time it is probable that Judah also confessed the over-lordship of northern Israel. The temporary respite from vexing wars gave opportunity for the development of commerce and industries. Friendly intercourse with Assyria brought capital and stimulus for the accumulation of individual wealth. As always in seasons of sudden prosperity, the rich were able to seize the opportunity to grow richer, while the condition of the poor was little changed. The prosperity of the kingdom manifested itself in the foundation of great estates, in the building of wonderful houses, in extravagant and luxurious living among the rich, accompanied by disregard of the rights of the poor and even bitter oppression. Law courts were bought by the highest bidder; money-lenders exacted usurious fees. The poor, obliged to sell their land, helped to add to the rich man's estate.

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[1] See II Kings 14:23–29 for the story of the reign of Jeroboam.

In harmony with all this seeming prosperity[1] was the appreciation of the people of the blessings and favor of Jehovah evidenced in it. Rich altars with multitudinous sacrifices, offered in the midst of extravagant festivities, bound king and people together in a joyous religion of thanksgiving and self-congratulation. Amid all this glory of life none seemed to fear that the friendly Assyrian might attempt to absorb the little kingdom, or to see that the commercial life of the people was rotten and unstable, without moral basis, or to comprehend that the religion into which the people threw themselves with such abandon of joy was an external and commercial acknowledgment of the favor of Jehovah, showing profound ignorance of his real character, and of his requirements in daily living. The Jehovah of their imagination was as unmoral as were they themselves.

We said that none saw. There was one, a man of the people, tending his sycamore trees and following his flocks somewhere in the wilderness of Tekoa, the arid and forbidding country south of Bethlehem, not more than twelve miles from Jerusalem. This man, like many a farmer of our own day, was observing with keenness of vision and judgment all which took place about him.[2] In Amos we find a worthy successor of the prophets who preceded him, and an inspiration to many of the spokesmen of Jehovah who followed. His work is disclosed to us in a book bearing his name, a book which vividly portrays the conditions of his times, and his

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[1] To the Hebrew, who regarded his God as stronger than all other gods and who knew no evidence of the favor of God save that of external prosperity, to dream of disaster in the face of such evidence was impossible. Then, as now, the joy of the consciousness of the favor of God lay in a right relationship to him. At that time the conception of God was so gross, however, that people could think of him only as being pleased with material gifts and responding to the call of his people in like gifts. To what extent has our conception of God changed in this respect, and why?

[2] In Palestine, the people were but a short time removed from the day when the kingdom was poor, and practical equality as to circumstances existed among the people. The occupation of a farmer or of a shepherd was honorable and useful, and essential to the well-being of the nation. A man living in Palestine could not be far away from the centers of political life. A farmer, whose life was perhaps less strenuous than that of those who lived in cities, would probably have more time for quiet and thoughtful consideration of passing events; his judgment upon them would be more unprejudiced and calm than that of those in the midst of the turmoil.

THE WILDERNESS OF TEKOA SHOWING ROAD ACROSS THE PLAIN

vigorous and appalling interpretation of them. Unlike many of the books of the Bible, his is prefaced by a date, "The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he spake concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake," evidently a memorable date well known to the people.

Let us imagine this sturdy shepherd in the solitude of his native desert, yet with the towered city of Jerusalem but twelve miles away, the highroad from Hebron to the north but one hour to the west, and a half-hour beyond that the highland, from which the Philistine plain stretched out toward the sea. Ten miles beyond Jerusalem, in the territory of northern Israel, was the royal sanctuary of Bethel, where the worship of Jehovah was conducted with splendor such as had never before been seen in the Northern Kingdom, and less than thirty miles beyond that lay Samaria, the splendid capital, where wealth was pouring in from all sides as the rich men of the nation gravitated toward the more important cities.

Thus alone, yet within easy reach of the teeming life of both his own Judea and northern cities, busied with his daily toil, or journeying to Jerusalem, to Bethel, to Gilgal, to Samaria, and even to Damascus, where the markets gave returns for his sheep and his figs, Amos observed and pondered, until a mighty spirit of indignation at what he saw, at what he deemed Israel's blindness and folly, swept over him, possessed him, and sent him forth upon the unwelcome errand of a man whose ruling passion was justice, to a nation wherein there was no justice. As a citizen of Judah, the sternness of his message to northern Israel would hardly be mitigated by sympathy. The substance and the spirit of that message can best be seen in extracts from the pages of his book.[1]

[1] The Book of Amos contains nine chapters in our version of the Bible. It is not chronologically arranged and consists of messages of judgment, some of which take the form of visions, and one small section of narrative, probably written down after a visit to Bethel, which is described in these pages a little later. The earthquake alluded to is not definitely dated and has not been found recorded in history. It was probably a local disturbance, but familiar to the people of Palestine.

Amos at Bethel

Our first selection shows Amos at the great sanctuary at Bethel[1] on the occasion of one of the stated religious festivals, not as a worshiper, since he would naturally worship at the southern sanctuaries. The king and his retinue are present in the city. No doubt the splendid celebration is accompanied by much dissipation, immoderate eating and drinking, dancing, and revelry, common to oriental religious manifestations. Unlike his predecessors Amos breaks upon these scenes, not with a message to the king, but to the people,[2] a message before the terrors of which, back in his mountain home where he had pleaded with Jehovah for the little nation, even his own heart had quailed. His message takes the form of vision,[3] perhaps a true representation of the pictures which had come to his mind in former days, or it may have been only a device chosen by the speaker to make more vivid his stinging words.[4]

I[5]

Thus the Lord Jehovah[6] showed me,
And lo! (Jehovah) was forming locusts,[7]

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[1] *See location of Bethel on the map. Several centers of worship have already been noted, viz., Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, Ramah. The sanctuary at Bethel seems to have been a place to which the king and the court were accustomed to repair for worship at special seasons. It must be borne in mind that the people were expressing at this festival the most intense religious life. There was no lack of religion; it was the misconception of the character of God and of what constituted appropriate worship of such a God which made the difference between their conception of religion and our own.

[2] The fact that Amos now appears to the people rather than to the king indicates that the people have developed greatly since the day of Samuel and are now beginning to think and to act independently of king or of prophet. They had come to a consciousness of themselves which they did not before possess.

[3] The vision was a very common form of prophetic revelation It is simply another way of saying "I saw," and does not necessarily indicate that the seeing was with physical eyes. A vision seen only in the mind is equally as strong and as potent in its influence upon life as one seen with the physical eye.

[4] Amos 7:1*a–c*, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8*b*, 9.

[5] *The first strophe simply records a vision of the locusts devouring all. The prophet appeals from such destruction to Jehovah, who relents and changes his purpose of destruction.

[6] *Notice that Amos uses the double name, the Lord Jehovah. It is the natural expression of his feeling of the power and majesty of Jehovah.

[7] **Locusts:* The locusts were a fearful scourge in Palestine, coming in swarms and devouring everything green which came in their path.

In the beginning of the coming up of the aftergrowth;[1]
And when they were making an end
Of devouring the herb of the land,
Then I said, "O Lord Jehovah, forgive, I pray thee,
How can Jacob[2] stand, for he is small?"
Jehovah repented him concerning this,
"It shall not be," said Jehovah.

II[3]

Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me,
And lo! he was calling to contend,
By fire—the Lord Jehovah.
And it devoured the great deep,
And had begun to devour the land;
And I said, "O Lord Jehovah, cease, I pray thee.
How can Jacob stand, for he is small?"
Jehovah repented him concerning this,
"Neither shall this be," said Jehovah.

III[4, 5]

Thus (the Lord) showed me,
And lo! the Lord was stationed
Beside a wall, with a plumb-line in his hand.
And the Lord said: "Behold I am setting a plumb-line,

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[1] **Aftergrowth:* possibly the grass which sprang up after the first crop had been cut, or after the grass, to which the king was entitled as a tax for the provender of the domestic and cavalry horses and asses, was cut.

[2] *Jacob:* The prophets continually used representative names. In this case, it is an easy transfer in the mind of the prophet from Israel, which was the name given to Jacob of old by Jehovah, to the old name Jacob, used in this case of the people of Israel.

[3] *In the second strophe the vision is of a fire, so intense that it would burn the very foundations of water upon which the Hebrew supposed the surface of the earth to rest, and devour the land. At the petition of the prophet, Jehovah again withdraws his punishment.

[4] *In the third strophe, Jehovah is represented as testing the accuracy and correctness of a wall with a plumb line, the wall representing Israel, a process which shows the wall defective and worthy only of destruction.

[5] *In moments of great exaltation, religious or otherwise, the poetic form of expression is natural, especially among ancient nations. Thus we find, in the study of the prophets, that almost all of their oracles, visions, or speeches have come down to us in poetic form. The Hebrew poetry had no rhyme. It was chiefly evidenced by length and syntactical arrangement of lines, by cadences of accent in speaking.

In the midst of my people Israel,
I will not again pass by them any more.
And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate,
And the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword

IV[1, 2]

Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me,
And lo! a basket of summer fruit!

. . . . . .

And Jehovah said to me,
"The end has come unto my people Israel,
I will not again pass them by."

Hear this, oh ye that tread upon the needy,
And are for making the poor of the earth to cease, saying:
When will the new moon[3] pass that we may sell grain,
And the Sabbath that we may offer corn?
Diminishing the ephah and enlarging the shekel,
And perverting balances of deceit.

Jehovah hath sworn by the glory of Jacob:
"I will never forget all their deeds."

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and by the relation of lines in the strophe or stanza. In the proverbial poetry, which is the least exalted in tone, we find three very distinct kinds of relationship. A line may be: (1) a repetition in another form of the line preceding it; (2) a negative statement of the same preceding line; or (3) a continuance of the statement contained in it. This relationship is called parallelism, and is distinguished as synonymous, antithetic, or synthetic, according to the lines in question. In the more exalted forms of poetry, such as those of the prophets, however, this more formal arrangement is not so common. The spirit and form of the poetry of the prophets would correspond much more nearly with the blank verse of Shakespeare, which is a flexible instrument bound by no hard-and-fast rules for the length, the number, or the words terminating the lines. These poetic utterances generally fall into stanzas, or, as they are usually called, strophes. In the selections which follow, the strophes are observed, but in some cases have been broken purposely, parts having been omitted, or portions of strophes inserted. To see the stanza as it appears in our Standard Version one must consult the Bible itself. For the sake of bringing out the thought of a particular prophet, new juxtapositions have been made.

[1] Amos 8:1, 2*b*, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 3, 10, 11*b*, 12, 13, 14.

[2] In the fourth vision, the prophet sees Israel as short-lived as a basket of summer fruit.

[3] *The new moon, the first of the month, was observed as a popular holiday and marked by religious ceremonies and suspension of trade. The tradesmen are represented as impatient of the holiday and dishonest in their business.

On this account shall not the earth tremble,
And every inhabitant in her mourn?
And shall not the whole of it rise like the Nile,[1]
And sink like the Nile of Egypt?

"And it shall come to pass in that day,[2]
That I will cause the sun to set at noon,
And I will darken the earth in the clear day,
And the singing-women of the palace shall wail,"
It is the oracle of the Lord Jehovah:[3] A multitude of carcasses!
In every place they are cast.

"And I will turn your pilgrimages into mourning,
And all your songs into dirges,
And I will bring sackcloth upon all loins,
And upon every head baldness,
And I will make it like the mourning for an only son,
And the end of it like a bitter day."

"And I will send a famine in the land,
Not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water,
But for hearing the word of Jehovah.
And they shall wander from sea to sea,
And from the north even to the rising of the sun they shall run to and fro,
To seek the word of Jehovah, but they shall not find it."[4]

V[5, 6]

I saw the Lord standing by the altar,
And he said: "Smite the capitals,[7] that the thresholds may shake,

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[1] Therefore the anger of Jehovah at the deeds of Israel shall convulse the land as if it were a river, rising and falling like the Nile in its annual inundations.

[2] The allusion in lines 45–50 is to an eclipse of the sun, which was to the people of that time a certain indication of Jehovah's wrath.

[3] **It is the oracle of Jehovah:* a technical expression among the prophets for a message from Jehovah.

[4] Lines 55–60: a picture of the deepest mourning—a mourning intensified by the lack of any word of kindness from Jehovah, to whose messages through the prophets the people have turned a deaf ear.

[5] Amos 9: 1, 2, 3*a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, 4, 7, 8*a*, *b*.

[6] *A fifth vision shows Jehovah and the people assembled for worship, Jehovah in anger calling upon the building to fall and destroy the worshipers.

[7] **Capitals:* the top of the columns supporting the roof of the temple.

Yea, break them off upon the head of all of them,
And the residue of them I will slay with the sword.
There shall not escape of them a fugitive,
And there shall not be delivered of them a refugee."

"If they dig through to Sheol,[1]
Thence will my hand take them;
And if they climb up to heaven,
Thence will I bring them down;
And if they conceal themselves at the top of Carmel,[2]
Thence will I search them out and take them.

"And if they hide from before mine eyes at the bottom of the sea,
Thence will I command the serpent[3] and it will bite them;
And if they go about in captivity before their enemies,
Thence will I command the sword and it will slay them;
And I will put mine eye on them
For evil and not for good."

"Are ye not as the sons of the Cushites[4] unto me,
O sons of Israel?" It is the oracle of Jehovah.
"Did I not bring up Israel out of the land of Egypt,
And the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Kir?
Behold the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon this sinful kingdom,
And I will destroy it from off the face of the earth."[5]

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[1] **Sheol:* the underworld. The Hebrews had at different periods various ideas of the future. Sheol at this time represented simply a place, dark, removed, silent, an underworld where a man who in his extremity had even taken his own life could not hide from Jehovah.

[2] **Carmel:* the mount where Elijah offered his great sacrifice. One of the most inaccessible summits and abounding in caves with narrow entrances.

[3] **The serpent:* The mountain was close by the sea; therefore, if this hiding-place failed the culprit, the serpent of the sea would devour the fleeing fugitive.

[4] **The Cushites:* Ethiopians of Africa. Used to represent a people far away and out of the realm of Jehovah. The prophet here makes the claim that all the nations of the world, the Cushites, the Philistines, and the Arameans were equally with Israel subject to his power, and should he choose to abandon Israel, he could command the allegiance of whatever nation he chose.

[5] *The visions, five in number*, as a whole represent the people utterly regardless of Jehovah's requirement of honesty, and truth, and sincerity. The patience of Jehovah is at last exhausted and destruction is imminent and unavoidable.

Can we picture Amos standing in some frequented spot speaking thus to a scoffing crowd? What do they answer? "Only one of those mad prophet fellows"; "We have the true prophets of Jehovah with us"; "He is only wanting money"; and again, "What he says is treason, he should be done away with." Perhaps some devout soul might even shake his head in pity for the man possessed of such a crazy notion as that Jehovah was angry with his people, upon whom he was showering such evidences of his approval. We have, in the account which follows, no intimation of sympathy with the bold prophet under the arrest and the taunting accusations which resulted. We know only that Amos continued to reiterate his threats, picturing in even more personal terms the calamities which war was to bring upon his pursuers. He tells the story as follows:[1]

And sent Amaziah,[2] the priest of Bethel,
To Jeroboam, the king of Israel, saying:
"Amos has conspired against thee
In the midst of the house of Israel;
The land is not able
To contain all his words.

"For thus has Amos said:
Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
And Israel shall surely go captive from his land."

And Amaziah said unto Amos:
"O thou seer![3] Go flee thee to the land of Judah;
Eat bread there, and prophesy there.
But at Bethel no longer prophesy;
For it is the king's sanctuary,
It is the royal residence."

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[1] Amos 7: 10–12, 14–17.

[2] **Amaziah:* perhaps the chief among the priests at Bethel. Amos' act would be considered as conspiracy, because in denouncing the king he might simply be trying to gain sympathy in a conspiracy against the king.

[3] **Thou seer:* Note the old name for the prophet, used of Samuel in the story of the search for Saul's lost asses. It will be remembered that for his services the seer received payment. Amaziah scornfully commands Amos to return to his own land where he can get money for his prophecies with which to support himself.

And Amos answered and said to Amaziah;
"I am[1] no prophet, nor am I a prophet's son;
But a shepherd am I, and a dresser of sycamores;
Jehovah took me from behind the sheep,
And Jehovah said unto me:
Go, prophesy against my people, Israel.

"Now, therefore, hear the word of Jehovah:
Thou sayest, thou shalt not prophesy against Israel,
Nor preach against the house of Isaac—

"Therefore[2] thus hath Jehovah said:
Thy wife shall be outraged in the city,
Thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword;
And thy land shall be divided by line,[3]
Thou shalt die upon an unclean soil,[4]
And Israel shall surely go captive from his land."

Jehovah the God of the Nations

Amos, expelled from the northern sanctuary and from northern Israel, was not without resources. His burning conviction of impending judgment had not lessened, and he was not silenced. We have no records of further visits to the north, but doubtless there were many, when the prophet would be eyed askance by people who had heard of his strange words. For it must be borne in mind that the memory of the truth of the messages of Elijah and Elisha and of other prophets of calamities already experienced had given to the people a superstitious fear of the prophets. Yet this man Amos, according to his own story, was not one of the accredited number. He had not been trained among the prophets; he seemed to the people a mere imitator seeking for notoriety.

But in those days as now the pen was mightier than the sword.

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[1] *Amos disclaims any official relation to the order of prophets. He had not been educated under them, nor was he the son of one who had been so educated. His calling is simply that of conviction.

[2] The last strophe is a vivid picture of the conditions in a city falling into the hands of a foreign army.

[3] **Divided by line:* measured off with new boundaries to accommodate new citizens.

[4] **Unclean soil:* Palestine was the sacred ground in which every Hebrew desired to be buried. The soil of all other lands was unclean—in other words, unconsecrated.

Amos still pondered and then he wrote, and a portion of that which he wrote has come down to us in his book. His later messages were simple interpretations of facts, but they show to us a knowledge of the working of Jehovah in human life far in advance of that of his predecessors among the prophets. To Amos in the quiet stretches of his pastures, the activities of Jehovah, "Jehovah of Hosts" as he called him, were not confined to Palestine. His was a might which controlled all nations at his will. To Israel had been given special care and favor, and from Israel was expected a spiritual understanding which the other nations with their characterless gods might not possess.

> "You only have I known of all the families of the earth,
> Therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities."

Israel's failure was complete. The arraignment of the surrounding nations[1,2] which follows is full of the new conception of Jehovah. It must also be noted that the sins for which the nations are to be punished are all breaches of some fundamental moral law, a law set for them as well as for Israel, by Jehovah the God of nations—a universal moral law.

I

Judgment upon Syria[3]

Thus hath Jehovah said:
"For three transgressions of Damascus,[4]
Yea, for four, I will not revoke it;
Because they have threshed with threshing instruments of iron[5]
Gilead."[6]

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[1] Amos 1:3–7, 8*c*, *a*, *b*, *d*, 13–15.

[2] *Locate on the map the nations Syria, Philistia, Ammon, Moab, and see how they surround Israel.

[3] **Judgment upon Syria:* Note the repetition of the phrase, "For three transgressions, yea, for four," indicating the fulness of the rebellious spirit which had characterized the actions of the nations indicated.

[4] **Damascus:* the capital city of Syria.

[5] **Threshing instruments of iron:* To appreciate this figure, we must recall the method of threshing in Palestine, the grain being trodden out on a threshing-floor by oxen, in this case represented as shod with instruments of iron, or treading the threshing sledge with its iron fingers underneath.

[6] **Gilead:* a section of Eastern Palestine (see map).

"And I will send a fire in the house of Hazael,[1]
And it shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad;
And I will break the bars of Damascus."[2]

"And I will cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven,[3]
And the scepter-holder from Beth-Eden;[4]
And the people of Aram[5] shall go into captivity to Kir."[6]

II

Judgment upon Philistia

Thus hath Jehovah said:
"For three transgressions of Gaza,[7]
Yea, for four, I will not revoke it;
Because they carried whole peoples into captivity,
To sell them as slaves to Edom."

"And I will send a fire in the wall of Gaza,
And it shall devour her palaces;
And I will turn my hand against Ekron;"[8]

"And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod,
And the scepter-holder from Askelon,
And the remnant of the Philistines shall perish."

III

Judgment upon Ammon

Thus hath Jehovah said:
"For three transgressions of the children of Ammon,
Yea, for four, I will not revoke it;
Because they have treated inhumanly the women of Gilead,
That they might enlarge their border."

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[1] **Hazael, Benhadad:* refer to families or dynasties founded by these men in Syria.

[2] **Bars of Damascus:* the gates which closed the walls of all ancient cities.

[3] **Aven:* an allusion to a form of worship of the sun practiced in Syria and centered at magnificent temples.

[4] **Beth Eden:* cannot be located positively. An ancient city.

[5] **Aram:* the name for the whole region in which Damascus was situated.

[6] **Kir:* supposed to have been the original home of the Syrians.

[7] **Gaza:* the principal city of Philistia, commanding the route between Egypt and Syria—a center of slave traffic. The accusation of the prophet is evidently that of the inhumanity of Gaza in appropriating whole populations for the purpose of securing slaves for sale to the surrounding countries.

[8] **Ekron, Ashdod, Ashkelon:* all cities of Philistia.

"But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah,[1]
And it shall devour her palaces,
With shouting in the day of battle,

"And their king shall go into exile,
He and his princes together";
Jehovah hath said.

IV

Judgment upon Moab[2, 3]

Thus hath Jehovah said:
"For three transgressions of Moab,
Yea, for four, I will not revoke it;
Because they burned the bones of the king of Edom,[4]
Desecrating the dead in return for violence done to Moab.

"But I will send a fire in Moab,
And it shall devour the palaces of Keryyoth,[5]
With shouting, with the sound of trumpet.

"I will cut off the judge from the midst of her,
And all her princes I will slay along with him;
Jehovah hath said."

V

Judgment upon Israel[6]

Thus hath Jehovah said:
"For three transgressions of Israel,
Yea, for four, I will not revoke it;

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[1] **Rabbah:* the capital of the Ammonites.

[2] Amos 2: 1, *2c*, *a*, *b*, *d*, 3, 6, 8, 7, 10, 11*a*, 12, 11*b*.

[3] The Moabites were related to the Hebrews in blood and language, differing only in dialect. Their country was wealthy but was subdued by David and again by Omri, revolting under his son, Ahab.

[4] **Burned the bones of the king of Edom:* a violation of the sanctity of the tombs of the kings. In ancient times the tomb was regarded with great reverence, and such an indignity was not to be forgiven. We have no record of this particular act in the history of the Hebrews.

[5] **Keryyoth:* probably a representative city of Moab, if not the capital.

[6] Note the skill of the prophet in drawing the attention and sympathy of Israel to his denunciations of their enemies. How much more effective is his judgment of Israel following as a climax upon the preceding judgments, saying in effect, "I will bring punishment upon these foreign lands who had not my message and knew not my will, because their sins were such as any right-minded person would condemn";

Because they sell the righteous[1] for money,
And the needy for a pair of shoes.

"Because garments taken in pledge[2] they out-spread
Beside every altar,
And the wine of such as have been fined they drink,
In the houses of their gods.

"Who crush the head of the poor,
And the way of the humble they turn aside,
A man and his judge conspire together,[3]
Profaning my holy name."

"Yet it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt,
And led you in the wilderness forty years,
I who brought you hither to possess the land of the Amorite.[4]

"It was I who destroyed from before them the Amorite,
Whose height was like that of the cedars, and whose strength was like that of the oaks;
I who destroyed his fruit from above and his roots from beneath.

"Moreover I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your youths for nazirites;

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but he goes on to say, "Israel has received my message through her prophets and her chosen men; Israel has not listened; she has closed her eyes and her ears. She is, therefore, far more to blame for her present condition than these other nations; I will therefore punish her with greater severity."

[1] **Sell the righteous:* that is, perverted justice in the courts.

[2] **Garments taken in pledge:* It was not lawful in Israel for one to retain over night the outer garment of a man taken as a pledge of the payment of a debt. This garment was frequently used for a covering at night and as a protection from storm, as well as for the sake of appearance, and to deprive a man of it was taking something that was counted too essential to be seized for debt. These unrighteous judges are represented as offering such garments, taken from their debtors, to Jehovah, in the belief that as gifts to him they would be acceptable. The whole picture of strophes 1, 2, and 3 in this section is that of the most cruel and heartless oppression of the poor by the judges to whom they appealed for justice.

[3] **Conspire together:* that is, fix up matters without regard to the right.

[4] **The Amorites:* a people living east of the Jordan, ruled over by two strong kings.

But ye made the nazirites[1] drink wine, and upon the prophets ye laid prohibition."
Is not this indeed so, O children of Israel? It is the oracle of Jehovah.

"Therefore, behold, it is I[2]
Who will make you groan in your places,
Just as the threshing-wagon makes groan
(The floor) filled with sheaves."

"Then shall refuge fail to the swift,
And the strong shall not become stronger,
The warrior shall not deliver himself,
And he that handles the bow shall not stand.

"The swift of foot shall not rescue himself,
Nor the stoutest of heart among the warriors;
The skilled shall not deliver himself,
And he that rideth a horse shall flee away in that day."[3]

Israel Fails to Understand the Divine Judgments[4]

But the meditations of Amos were not alone upon the present. He saw in the great calamities of Nature which had periodically appalled the people the unsuccessful attempts of Jehovah to reveal to them his character of justice, and to arouse them to an appreciation of their situation.

"Go ye to Bethel and transgress,
In Gilgal increase transgression,
And bring every morning your sacrifices,
Every third day your tithes.

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[1] **Nazirite:* a man supposed to be particularly dedicated to Jehovah by a vow requiring him to refrain from drinking wine, approaching a dead body, or cutting the hair or beard. Some of the prophets were probably Nazirites. Samson is mentioned as a Nazirite. The last strophe refers to the fact that the people had even persuaded the Nazirites to break their vows and had closed the mouths of the prophets.

[2] Amos 2: 13, 14, 15*a*, *b*, 16*a*, 15*c*, 16*b*.

[3] The strophe here represents the disasters of war, a strong nation against a weak one, in which neither cavalry, footmen, nor archers shall be able to stand and the horses of the cavalrymen shall be of use only to assist in their flight.

[4] Amos 4: 4, 5, 6, 7*a*, 8*b*, 9, 10, 11, 12*a*, 13*e*, 12*b*, *c*.

"Burn of leavened bread a thank-offering,
And proclaim free-will offerings, make them known,
For so ye love to do, O children of Israel";
It is the oracle of the Lord Jehovah.

"I also it was who gave to you[1]
Cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
And lack of bread in all your households,
But ye did not return unto me"; it is the oracle of Jehovah.

"I also it was who withheld from you the rain,
I who sent rain upon one city,
While upon another city I sent none;
But ye did not return unto me"; it is the oracle of Jehovah.

"I smote you with blight and decay,
I laid waste your gardens and vineyards;
Your fig-trees and olive-trees the locust devoured;
But ye did not return unto me"; it is the oracle of Jehovah.

"I sent among you the pestilence as in Egypt;
I slew your young men with the sword;
And I caused the stench of your camps to rise in your nostrils;
But ye did not return unto me"; it is the oracle of Jehovah.

"I overthrew cities among you . . . .
As were overthrown Sodom and Gomorrah;[2]
And ye were as a brand snatched from the blaze;
But ye did not return unto me"; it is the oracle of Jehovah.

"Therefore thus will I do to thee, O Israel,"
Jehovah, God of hosts, is his name;
"Because I will do thus to thee,
Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

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[1] *The selection here presented pictures, as coming from Jehovah, such calamities as famine in strophe 3; drought in strophe 4; disaster to crops, blight, decay, the locust, the storm, strophe 5; pestilence and war, strophe 6—all of which Jehovah has permitted the nation to survive. Since these disasters were sent to the people as warnings to turn to Jehovah in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, the time has now passed when appeal to Jehovah will save them. The people crowding to the altars with sacrifices cannot prevail upon Jehovah to change his purpose. It would be better for them to prepare for the terrible day of his coming as best they may.

[2] **Sodom and Gomorrah:* ancient cities which Jehovah had destroyed by fire from heaven in wrath at their wickedness.

The Offenses of Israel[1, 2]

Once more we read the accusations of Amos—violation of fundamental moral laws, lack of common honesty and regard for the easily recognized rights of the poor, drunkenness, dissipation, frivolity, waste of life, not failure to worship Jehovah, but utter failure to understand his moral requirements, and above all no knowledge of his justice which must demand retribution in proportion to the wilful blindness of the people.

Ye who turn judgment to wormwood,
And cast righteousness to the ground,
Because ye trample upon the meek,
And take from him exactions of grain,
Houses of hewn stone ye have built,
But ye shall not dwell in them,
Vineyards of delight ye have planted,
But ye shall not drink their wine.

Surely I know that many are your transgressions,
And great are your sins;
Therefore thus hath Jehovah said,
"I will cause shouting in all squares for mourning,
And in all streets they shall say, Woe! Woe!
And the husbandman shall summon to mourning:
Yea, in all vineyards there shall be mourning,
When I pass through the midst of thee," hath Jehovah said.
Seek good and not evil,
That ye may live;
That so may be Jehovah, God of hosts,
With you, as ye have said.

Hate evil and love good,
And establish justice in the gate;
Perhaps, Jehovah may be gracious,
The God of hosts, to a remnant of Joseph.

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[1] Amos 5: 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

[2] The only hope held out by Amos is expressed in this passage. Perhaps a turning to good and to justice might even at this late day cause Jehovah to relent, but the concluding phrases again picture the coming destruction, and we feel that in the heart of Amos this hope had little foundation. The passage is the essence of the passion for justice which controlled the prophet, a justice which would not fail to recognize and to recompense even such a latter-day repentance.

The Coming Destroyer[1]

But what is the destruction which Amos foresees? Is it to come from within or from without? It is the Assyrian. Amos reads truly the aggressive policy of that nation. He knows that the temporary respite cannot last, and that sooner or later the Assyrian will return and continue his conquest of the west. This is the terrible judgment which Jehovah is bringing upon his people. Israel's wealth of worship can have no influence upon a moral God. His demand is for conduct. Amos seizes upon the current belief in a "Day of Jehovah," to which the people look forward as the time when Jehovah will come to earth and reign in person over the people of his choice. But Amos represents the day as a day of retribution, one in which Israel will hide her face from the presence of Jehovah, one in which she will be utterly repudiated by her God, and exterminated by the great Assyrian.

Alas for those who long for the day of Jehovah;
It is darkness, and not light.
As when one flees from a lion and a bear meets him,
Or going into the house, and leaning his hand upon the wall,
a serpent bites him.
Shall not Jehovah's day be darkness and not light,
Yea, deep darkness without any brightness in it?

"I hate, I despise your feasts,[2]
And I will not smell in your festivals.
Your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings I will not accept.
Take away from me the noise of your songs and the melody
of your lyres;
And let justice roll as waters,
And righteousness as an ever-flowing stream.

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[1] Amos 5:18–27.

[2] **I despise your feasts:* The prophet does not mean to say that Jehovah will not accept a religion expressed in sacrifices, or that he disapproves of all forms of sacrifice. He is simply saying that they have overdone sacrifices and religious festivals and have utterly disregarded the real moral foundation of religion—justice and righteousness. As proof of his theory of God, he recalls the life of Israel in the wilderness in its simplicity, when there were no great shrines and no images (referring to the images through which Jehovah was doubtless worshiped at these great shrines) but only simple sacrifices and freewill offerings.

"Was it only sacrifices and offerings ye brought me in the wilderness
During forty years, O house of Israel?
But now ye lift up the shrine of your king,
And an image of your God which ye have made for yourselves;
And so I will carry you into exile beyond Damascus,"[1]
Hath said Jehovah, God of hosts is his name.

. . . . . .

The Lord[2,3] Jehovah hath sworn by himself:
"I abhor the glory of Jacob,
His palaces I hate,
And I will deliver up the city and its contents;
And one shall smite the great house into fragments,
And the small house into fissures."

"Do horses run upon crags?
Does one plough the sea with oxen?
That ye have turned justice into poison
And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.
Who rejoice in that which is not,
Who say: Have we not taken for ourselves horns by our own strength?"

"Yea, behold I am raising up against you,
O house of Israel, a nation;
And they shall crush you,
From the entrance to Hamath[4]
Unto the stream of the Arabah";[5]
It is the oracle of Jehovah, God of hosts.

With these words of bitterness upon his pen we must leave our prophet. It was not given to any one of the Old Testament teach-

[1] **Beyond Damascus:* a plain reference to the Assyrians, whose lands lay beyond Damascus in the region of the Euphrates.

[2] Amos 6: 8*a*, *c*, *e*, 11*b*, *c*, 12, 13, 14*a*, *c*, *b*.

[3] In this selection the prophet again reiterates the sacred oath of Jehovah that he will destroy the nation and compares the insincerity and conceit of their present life to the insecurity of horses running upon crags, or an attempt to plow the sea with oxen. He again alludes most clearly to the coming of the Assyrian.

[4] *Hamath:* mark the boundaries of Jeroboam's great kingdom.

[5] *Arabah:* the channel through which flowed the Jordan and the valley in which the Dead Sea lay, running down to the extreme southern end of the kingdom.

ers to see all of God. Amos reveals him to us on a grander scale than his predecessors conceived—Jehovah of Hosts, the commander of the armies of the world, all powerful, perfect in justice, disciplining, chastising, teaching men of all nations the great moralities. As we see his message thus, Amos rises before us a Titanic figure clothed in a majesty which is the reflection of his own thought of Jehovah. But we must not lose sight of what Israel saw, a simple, stern shepherd of the Judean hills, strangely, even foolishly, interpreting the God who was showering his blessings upon them. It is not alone in the Israel of the days of Amos that the apostles of great reforms have been misinterpreted and scoffed at or ignored.[1]

[1] Having gained a picture of the prophet Amos and his ideals of justice and righteousness, as well as his conception of God, raise with yourself the following questions: Was the work of Amos likely to repel people from Jehovah or to draw them to him? If it was a repellant message, did Amos feel that in delivering it, he would bring the people to his conception of Jehovah? Was his conception of Jehovah a misconception? If so, how was he better than the people to whom he delivered the message, who also misconceived Jehovah? Is it the privilege of every reformer to try to change customs or conditions to conform to his higher ideals, even though he knows that the latter are limited, and that the people coming after him will have still higher and better ideals?

CHAPTER VIII

HOSEA, THE INTERPRETER OF JEHOVAH'S LOVE

No student of these pages will have failed to realize in some degree in his own life that experience brings knowledge, and that character develops in accordance with our understanding of the lessons of life. In this chapter we have the story of a man who rose out of bitter personal experience to new heights of spiritual vision, and of knowledge of the character of Jehovah, while many of those with whom he pleaded sank into spiritual bewilderment, and deeper ignorance of the true character of their God.

Reference to chap. vii of the present volume, and to II Kings 15: 8–25 shows us a veritable reign of terror in Israel following the long and prosperous period of Jeroboam II, during which we have seen Amos uttering his brave denunciations. Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, succeeded him at his death and within six months was assassinated by a conspirator, who was himself, before a month had passed, the victim of Menahem of Tirzah. The latter established himself more firmly than his immediate predecessors by the slaughter of all whose loyalty he doubted, and by the payment to Assyria of an enormous tribute which he exacted from the people. Thus he was able to hold the throne until his death, ten years later. His son remained in power but little over a year, dying by the hand of a conspirator from across the Jordan, Pekah of the land of Gilead. This last usurpation occurred about 736 B.C., and marks the latest probable limit of the work of the prophet whose career falls in this period.

We cannot read even so brief a summary of conditions in Israel without being assured that her old confidence, so marked in the reign of the great Jeroboam II, must have given place to full consciousness of the dangers which threatened the nation from within and from without. Her princes, fawning upon the majesty of Assyria, paying heavy tribute, and apparently having ground for hope of continued existence only in the maintenance of friendly relations with that great power, yet weakly countenanced appeals to Egypt, some foolishly dreaming that that fast-decaying empire

might, if supported by the countries of the eastern Mediterranean coast, overcome the younger, more vigorous nation of the Euphrates and the Tigris.

Thus divided against itself as to foreign policy, and utterly demoralized as to its internal government, the political fate of Israel should have been easy to foresee. But with the glories of Jeroboam's reign but a decade behind them, princes and people clung to the belief that their confusion was only temporary. They saw no cause for national decay in the immoral life of the people and in the intrusion of these immoralities into the very heart of their religion.[1] The old sites of Canaanitish worship which had been appropriated to the worship of Jehovah were surrounded with associations of the ancient Baalism of Canaan, and the people were too blind to see that the rites and ceremonies which were the accompaniment of worship at these high-places were out of harmony with the character of Jehovah. Images were found in all these centers, images through which the people had been accustomed to worship Jehovah. How easy to turn from these to the images which represented the gods of Assyria and Egypt! Only the prophets in this period saw that there could be no true worship of Jehovah through such symbols, and that the people were frequently worshiping not the spiritual God represented by the image, but the image itself in which they believed that power dwelt. This realization marks an important stage in the development of Israel's religion. It was the beginning of the long struggle against image-worship which ended only with the destruction of the nation.

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[1] It is necessary to recall the ancient custom of worshiping the gods on elevations, mountains, hills, the sanctuaries upon which were popularly called "high-places." Probably the best sites had been already appropriated to religious worship when the Hebrews entered the kingdom, and it was only natural when the worship of Jehovah became the national religion that these same high places should be consecrated to him. At the same time the common people would be continually reminded of the old gods and there would be constant inclination to continue at these scenes the forms of the old worship, although addressed to a God of another name. In the worship at these sanctuaries images had been freely used, and many people, as well as officiating priests, failed to understand the importance of the second commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee graven images," and to realize that only in absolute prohibition of these instruments, so long associated with other religions, could Jehovah-worship establish itself in the land.

In the midst of religious confusion and political anarchy, high-born, well-bred, perhaps a priest of Jehovah (although this is suggested only by his remarkable familiarity with internal conditions in the priesthood of his day), we find Hosea the prophet, who came to his work through a strange experience of shame and sorrow. The tragedy of his life is related by himself and is frankly made the basis of his new realization of the character of Jehovah. In brief it is as follows:

Wedding in early manhood, in purest love, Gomer, the woman of his choice, he finds her unfaithful to him. After years of forbearance with her waywardness, years in which we can imagine the prophet enduring the shame of publicity in his family disgrace, as well as the agony of wounded affection, she left him with three children, to whom in the bitterness of his soul he had given names symbolic of his sorrow. Years elapsed. Hosea's faithful love ripened and deepened into an infinite tenderness and patience, which embraced not only his erring wife, but the whole people of Israel. At last Gomer, having gone from bad to worse, reached the slave market, where Hosea, walking in the market-place, came upon her, bound and shackled. Overwhelmed with pity and love, and trembling with the hope of her redemption, he purchased her, restored her to his home and to a probation the end of which should be, if all went well, restoration to the high office of wife and mother. To a man of such fidelity and power to forgive came, out of the depth of his sorrow, the call to reinterpret Jehovah to his people.[1]

The text of no other book of the Bible has suffered so much as that of the book of Hosea. Its broken and incoherent sentences testify, however, not only to the loss of old material and to the insertion of new, but to the passion and sorrow of the writer, torn with conflicting emotions of sympathy with his people in their national disasters, and anger at their faithlessness and blindness.

[1] Some scholars regard the story of Hosea's life-tragedy as an allegory through which he tries to develop his teaching concerning the character of God. It hardly seems, however, that a mere allegory could have so permeated his thinking that it would form the basis of practically every utterance. The history of thought shows many instances of great truths born of deep experiences, and to regard the story as a simple statement of the facts of Hosea's life seems the most rational way to interpret the deep feeling with which the whole book vibrates.

Hosea's Complaint against Israel

The following passage voices Hosea's complaint against the people. In it we see the sum and substance of all that Hosea bewails, a reign of terror under which the people suffer, lying, killing, stealing; an absolute lack of civic and social control; a debauched priesthood profiting by the sins of the people, who turn with equal ease to Jehovah and to idols for succor in their extremity; treacherous and usurping rulers, holding power for a day. In the words of Hosea:

All their kings have fallen,
No one among them calling for Jehovah.

And above all we see an almost universal lack of knowledge of the moral demands of their God.

To the people:

Hear[1] the word of Jehovah,
O children of Israel;
Jehovah has a contention
With the inhabitants of the land;
For there is no truth, nor love,
Nor knowledge of God[2] in the land;
But swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery;[3]
They break into (houses), blood striking blood,
Therefore the land mourns,
And every inhabitant languishes,
Even the beasts of the field and the fowl of the heavens,
While the fish of the sea are taken away.[4]

To the Priests:[5]

Still let none find fault,
And let none reprove,

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[1] Hos. 4: 1–3, 4, 5–9, 12*a*, *b*, 13*a*, 16, 17.

[2] **Knowledge of God:* This does not refer to mere external knowledge of Jehovah as the God of the land, but rather to an understanding of his moral character and requirements.

[3] Lines 7, 8: the sins prohibited in the Ten Commandments, which were probably known to the people at this time, thieving, murder, dishonesty, profanity, and adultery.

[4] Lines 10–12 seem to point to a drought so severe that it affected the inhabitants of the land, the beasts, the birds, and even the fishes, and this drought Hosea attributes to the anger of Jehovah.

[5] Strophe 2: Hosea turns to the priests and the prophets, representing the recognized teachers of the people, with accusations and threats.

Since my people but follow their priestlings;
O priest, thou shalt fall by day,
And the prophet also shall fall with thee,
And by night I will destroy thy mother.[1]
My people will be destroyed by reason of their lack of knowledge,
Because thou hast rejected knowledge,
I reject thee from being priest to me;
And because thou hast forgotten the law of thy God,
I will forget thy children, even I.

Soliloquy:[2]

According to their number so they sin;
They have exchanged their glory for shame.
They feed on the sin of my people,
And unto their iniquity they lift up their souls.
And so it becomes like people, like priest:
And I will visit punishment upon his ways,
And his deeds I will requite to him.
For they have left off heeding Jehovah.
Yea, my people ask counsel at their wood;
Their staff declares to them the oracle.[3]
Upon the tops of the mountains they sacrifice,
And upon the hills they make offerings,
Yea, like a stubborn heifer, Israel acts stubbornly.
Can Jehovah now feed them like a lamb in a broad place?
Ephraim[4] is wedded to idols;[5] leave him alone.

Jehovah Forsaken and Insulted[6]

A still more bitter arraignment, in which the princes are particularly assailed for their lack of confidence in Jehovah and their appeals to foreign nations, is found in the following:

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[1] **Thy mother:* that is, the nation.

[2] Strophe 3: the prophet soliloquizes that priests are no better than common people, that they hold their offices for private gain. The result of such conduct will lead to the loss of their office when Jehovah rouses himself, and there will be no need of a priest.

[3] **Their staff:* referring to idols, and, perhaps, the divining-rod, associated with older forms of worship.

[4] **Ephraim:* the name of one of the tribes of northern Israel very frequently used to represent the whole nation, as Judah, another tribal name, came to represent all of southern Israel.

[5] **Wedded to idols:* that is, cannot be separated from her old ideas and instruments of worship.

[6] Hos. 5:8–14.

Blow the trumpet in Gibeah,[1]
The cornet in Ramah;
Cry aloud in Bethel;
Make Benjamin to tremble.[2]
Ephraim shall become a desolation,
In the day of punishment.
Against Israel's tribes I make known that which is sure.
The princes of Israel have become
Like removers of landmarks.[3]
Upon them I will pour out my wrath like water.
Ephraim practices oppression! He breaks down right!
Because he has determined to go after vanity.

And it is I who am like a moth to Ephraim,[4]
Like rottenness to the house of Israel.
When Ephraim saw his sickness,
And Israel his sore;
Then Ephraim went to Assyria,[5]
Yea, Israel sent to king Jareb;[6]
But he cannot relieve you,
Nor will he heal you of your wound.
For I myself will be like a lion to Ephraim,
And like a young lion to the house of Israel.
I, even I, will rend and get me away;
I will carry off and none shall rescue.

Love, the Desire of Jehovah[7]

But not wholly have the people forsaken Jehovah, and in their vacillations lie the hope and the despair of the prophet. With

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[1] Strophe 1: the prophet calls for a proclamation from all the hills and prominences of the destruction which is coming upon Israel's political leaders.

[2] **Benjamin:* Traditionally located just south of Ephraim. Perhaps meant here as a warning that the destruction which is coming upon Israel will continue southward and may reach Judah.

[3] **Removers of landmarks:* a low form of thievery, and probably the most opprobrious term that could be applied to the priests.

[4] Strophe 2: the destruction which Jehovah is bringing upon the nation is inevitable, for it comes from within, like a moth or rottenness.

[5] *Then Ephraim went to Assyria:* hoping to avert the disaster, appealing to Assyria rather than to Jehovah.

[6] **Jareb:* the reference is not clear. No king of this name is known, but it may have been a name applied to some Assyrian monarch or a king in Egypt.

[7] Hos. 5:15; 6:1–6.

patient love he faces the discouraging shallowness of their appreciation of the character of their God, and reiterates with added tenderness the old doctrine of obedience rather than sacrifice, as acceptable to Jehovah. In the mouth of Hosea, however, obedience has been transformed. It is no longer the obedience inspired by a command, but that which is incited by a desire to obey which is rooted in love.

I [1]will return again to my place,
Until they are confounded and seek my face.
In their distress they will seek me.
(Saying) "Come, let us turn unto Jehovah,
For he has torn that he may heal us,
And he has smitten that he may bind us up.
He will revive us after two or three days;
He will establish us that we may live before him."

"Yea, let us know, let us be zealous to know Jehovah.
When we seek him, then we shall find him;
And he will come as the winter rain[2] to us,
As the spring rain[3] which waters the earth."

What can I make of you, O Ephraim!
What can I make of you, O Israel!
Since your love is like a morning-cloud,
Yea, like the dew which early goes away.
. . . . . .
Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets,
I have slain them by the words of my mouth,
And my judgment is like the light which goes forth.
For[4] it is love that I delight in and not sacrifice;
Yea, knowledge of God, and not burnt-offerings.

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[1] Strophe 1: Hosea predicts a time when the people will vainly try to persuade themselves that Jehovah is but wounding in order that he may heal; when they will turn to him with painful zeal, expecting him to send refreshing blessings, but they will be disappointed because they have failed to understand the message of the prophets, that life rather than worship, love rather than offerings, are the demands of Jehovah.

[2] **The winter rain:* usually a heavy, pouring rain.

[3] **The spring rain:* very important because necessary to an abundant harvest.

[4] *Love not sacrifices:* The prophet does not mean to say that Jehovah does not desire sacrifices, but that he does desire sincere worship and a religion which is expressed in right living and a right attitude toward one's fellow-men.

The Coming Destruction[1]

The coming of the Assyrian, so clearly seen by Amos, is ever present with Hosea. He is in the midst of the fulfilment of the prediction of Amos. Thus he pictures the political bewilderment of his people.

> And so Ephraim has become like a foolish dove, without understanding;
> To Egypt they go, to Assyria they cry.

Such confusion could lead to but one end, the deportation which was Assyria's accustomed way of treating the peoples whom she conquered. But Hosea's predictions were received with the same skepticism which his predecessors had encountered.

> Rejoice[2] not, O Israel, like the peoples;
> Threshing-floor and wine-vat shall not know them,
> And the new wine shall play them false.
> They shall not pour libations of wine to Jehovah,
> Nor prepare for him their sacrifices.
> Their bread shall be like the bread of mourning;
> All who eat it shall defile themselves.
> For their bread shall be only for their hunger,
> It shall not come into Jehovah's house.
>
> They shall not dwell in the land of Jehovah,[3]
> And Ephraim shall return to Egypt;
> And in Assyria they shall eat what is unclean.[4]
> What will ye do on the day of the festival?
> Or on the day of feasting to Jehovah?
> For behold they will go to Assyria,
> Egypt gathering them, Memphis burying them:
> Nettles inheriting their precious things of silver:
> Thorns coming up in their tents.

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[1] Hos. 9: 1, 2, 4, 3, 5, 8.

[2] Strophe 1: a picture of a time when there shall be no worship in Jehovah's land —perhaps addressed to the people at a time of some great religious festival in the celebration of which Israel is like the peoples about her, and which debases instead of ennobles Israel.

[3] Strophe 2: the time will come when Israel, scattered in foreign lands, will be without the means for the worship of Jehovah.

[4] *Unclean:* That is, unconsecrated.

The days[1] of visitation will come;
The days of recompense will come;
Israel shall know.
(The people say:) "A fool, the prophet;
Mad, the man of spirit."
(Yes;) because of the greatness of thine iniquity and thy sin.
Enmity exists toward Ephraim's watchman;
The prophet (finds) the snares of the fowler in all his ways;
In the (very) house of his God they dig for him a deep pit.

A Call to Repentance[2]

But to such a man as Hosea, there could be no hopeless sorrow. He cannot conceive of a God who will not forgive a repentant people. Not all the people were bent upon their own destruction. Perhaps there might be a saving number who could be turned to repentance. Thus impelled, Hosea speaks stimulating words of exhortation, pleading with the people to turn to Jehovah, while yet there is time. But even as he speaks he sees that they will not heed, and that final destruction cannot be long delayed.

Ephraim[3] indeed is a heifer loving to thresh,[4]
And even I myself have spared the beauty of her neck;
But now I will make Ephraim draw; Israel must plow;
Jacob must harrow for himself.

Ye have plowed wickedness, injustice ye have reaped.[5]
Ye have eaten the fruit of lies.
Sow for yourselves righteousness;
Reap the fruit of love;
Break up your fallow ground;
Yet there is time to seek Jehovah,
To the end that the fruit of righteousness may come to you.

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[1] Strophe 3: Israel now regards the prophet as mad and foolish, but the time will come when he will be vindicated.

[2] Hos. 10:11, 12, 13*a*, *b*, 14*a*, *c*, 15.

[3] Strophe 1: a figure indicating that Israel's days of ease are past and trouble is ahead.

[4] *Loving to thresh:* a much easier task than that of drawing the cart and keeping in the straight path of the plowman.

[5] Strophe 2: war is coming, disaster and ruin.

Because[1] thou didst trust in thy chariots[2] in the multitude
of thy mighty ones
Therefore the tumult (of war) shall arise among thy peoples,
And all thy fortresses shall be ruined.
The mother being broken with the children.
Thus will I do to you, O house of Israel;
Because of the evil of your evil,
In the dawn utterly undone shall be the king of Israel.

Jehovah a God, and Not Man[3]

The climax and the comfort of Hosea's message is reached in the last couplet of the passage which follows. Hosea, speaking as frequently before in the very person of Jehovah, reviews the past and yearns over the people of his choice with supreme tenderness, leaving us confident that whatever may have been the outcome of his experiment in the rebuilding of his own broken family life, in a holy God, infinitely more than man in his patience and forgiveness, love must be triumphant.

When Israel[4] was young then I came to love him,
And out of Egypt I called him;
The more I called them,
The farther they went away from me.
They keep sacrificing to the Baalim,
And making offerings to images.

Yet[5] it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
Taking them up in my arms;
And they did not know that I healed them.
With the cords of a man[6] I would draw them, with bands of
love;

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[1] Strophe 3: an appeal to the people. From the fruits of their experience they see the results of their immoral lives—why not turn to righteousness, love, and Jehovah?

[2] *Trust in thy chariots:* Israel has placed her confidence in great armies rather than in the strength of Jehovah. The armies will come, but they will be her undoing.

[3] Hos. 11: 1–7, 8*a*, 9*b*.

[4] Strophe 1: although from childhood I have called Israel they are farther away from me than ever.

[5] Strophe 2: though they were constantly going away from me, I have cared for them, healed them, provided for them, treated them tenderly.

[6] *The cords of a man:* The figure changes here from that of a parent leading a child to a good driver helping his team up a steep place.

And I was to them as one who lifts up the yoke[1] from upon
their jaws,
And I inclined unto him and would give him to eat.

He[2] must return to the land of Egypt,
Or Assyria will be his king; for they have refused to repent.
And so the sword will whirl in their cities,
And will devour in their fortresses.
My people having wearied me with their rebellions,
Unto the yoke will I appoint them,
Since I have ceased to love them.

How[3] can I give thee up, O Ephraim!
How can I surrender thee, O Israel!
For God am I and not man,
Holy in the midst of thee and not human.

Thus we see Hosea finding in the turmoil and confusion of his times the repetition of his own dark experience, and in his own love and forgiveness a reflection of what he conceives to be the divine love and forbearance of Jehovah for weak and wavering Israel. Then as now to men who obeyed Jehovah, conforming to so much of his will as they knew, a clearer vision of his character came. No longer might those who heeded the prophet conceive of their God as stern, all-powerful justice, loving and merciful only so long as their covenant remained unbroken, but rather as the Father-God, chastening his son in love, suffering in the frailties of his people, well-nigh despairing of their redemption, yet ever seeking to draw them with a love of which the love of husband and wife was but a suggestion. Hosea thought only of Israel, but he left not only Israel but all the world richer for his experience, and better prepared for the teaching of the Prophet of Nazareth in whose thought the divine Fatherhood

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[1] *Lifts up the yoke:* so adjusts the yoke that the oxen may eat with ease.

[2] Strophe 3: he can no longer remain in his land; he has wearied me with his rebellion.

[3] Strophe 4: yet, I cannot utterly surrender thee, for mine is not a love limited and human, but divine and infinite. This whole passage is full of paternal fondness and tenderness; nothing else in all prophecy so simply and exquisitely pictures the patience and love of Jehovah manifested in his dealings with Israel.

reached not alone to a nation, or to men of Israel's blood, but to all who would accept his love and the yoke of his service.[1]

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[1] As we proceed with our study we begin to realize through what struggles of men and nations the religious conceptions which surround us have come into existence. Have we any right to be indifferent to these ideas? Are we not under the deepest obligation to consider them and to assume toward them a personal relation, which will influence our lives and lead us to new and helpful relations with our God?

AN ASSYRIAN GOD

TABLE OF IMPORTANT HISTORICAL EVENTS

745 B.C. to 568 B.C.

B.C.	
745–727	Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria. Revival of Assyrian power.
743–740	Assyrian campaigns against Arpad, in Syria.
738	Assyrian campaign against Hamath, in Syria.
735–715	Ahaz, king of Judah.
735	Alliance of Northern Israel and Syria against Judah.
	Ahaz appeals to Tiglath-pileser, thus becoming a vassal of Assyria and subject to tribute.
734	Tiglath-pileser destroys Damascus, invades Northern Israel, and deports large numbers of the inhabitants.
	Hoshea becomes king of Israel as a vassal of Assyria.
727–722	Shalmaneser IV, king of Assyria.
725	Rebellion of Syria and Israel against Assyria.
724–721	Siege of Samaria; its capture by Sargon. End of Northern Israel.
721–705	Sargon, king of Assyria.
720	Sargon captures Hamath, in Syria.
720–710	Merodach-baladan, king in Babylon, a province of Assyria, becomes hostile to Assyria.
715–688	Hezekiah, king of Judah.
712–700	Shabaka, king of Egypt.
	Shabaka incites revolt in Palestine and Syria against Sargon.
711	Sargon invades Syria and Palestine and captures Ashdod.
705–681	Sennacherib, king of Assyria.
	Merodach-baladan again for a little while active in Babylon against Assyria.
705	Revolt in Palestine.
701	Sennacherib invades Palestine; overruns Judah and besieges Jerusalem; defeats Egyptian army at Altaqu; raises the siege of Jerusalem and returns to Assyria; Judah tributary to Assyria.
690	Destruction of Babylon by Assyria.
688–663	Tirhaka, king of Egypt; revival of Egyptian power.
688	Manasseh becomes king of Judah, as a vassal of Assyria.
681–668	Esarhaddon, king of Assyria.
	Four Assyrian campaigns against Tirhaka of Egypt with varying success. Memphis taken by Esarhaddon and the Delta made an Assyrian province (670).
668–626	Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria.
668	Ashurbanipal captures Memphis, in Egypt, which had revolted.
661	Height of Assyria's power. Ashurbanipal plunders Thebes and controls Egypt.
639	Josiah becomes king of Judah.

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626 Scythian hordes overrun western Asia.

Beginning of prophetic activity of Jeremiah and Zephaniah.

621 Discovery of the law book.

Inauguration of the reformation by King Josiah.

608 Pharaoh Necho invades Palestine and is intercepted by King Josiah at Megiddo, where Josiah is slain.

Jehoahaz is crowned king of Judah by the people and reigns for three months.

Pharaoh deposes Jehoahaz, carries him to Egypt, and places Jehoiakim on the throne in his stead as a vassal of Egypt.

606(?) Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, falls under the joint attack of the Medes and the Babylonians. The Assyrian empire comes to an end. Nahum, the prophet, celebrates her downfall in a paean of triumph.

605 Pharaoh Necho, advancing to seize upon the territory of the fallen Assyrian, is met at Carchemish on the Euphrates by Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, and defeated.

Pharaoh retires from western Asia and Palestine.

Nebuchadnezzar succeeds to the throne of Babylon.

Jehoiakim transfers his allegiance from Egypt to Babylonia.

600 Jehoiakim, weary of paying tribute, revolts from Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar sends his allies from among the neighbors of Judah to attack Jehoiakim.

597 Jehoiakim dies and is succeeded by Jehoiachin.

597 After Jehoiachin has reigned three months Nebuchadnezzar in person besieges Jerusalem, captures the city, deports Jehoiachin and ten thousand of the leading citizens to Babylon, and places Zedekiah on the throne as his vassal.

Habakkuk, the prophet, seeks to reassure Judah.

588 Zedekiah, instigated by Pharaoh Hophra, revolts from Babylon and Jerusalem is subjected to a three-years' siege by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah counsels surrender.

Pharaoh Hophra seeks to relieve Jerusalem by invading Palestine, but is driven back by Nebuchadnezzar.

586 Jerusalem falls. Large numbers of the people are taken into exile in Babylonia. Numbers flee to Egypt.

Gedaliah is appointed governor by Nebuchadnezzar.

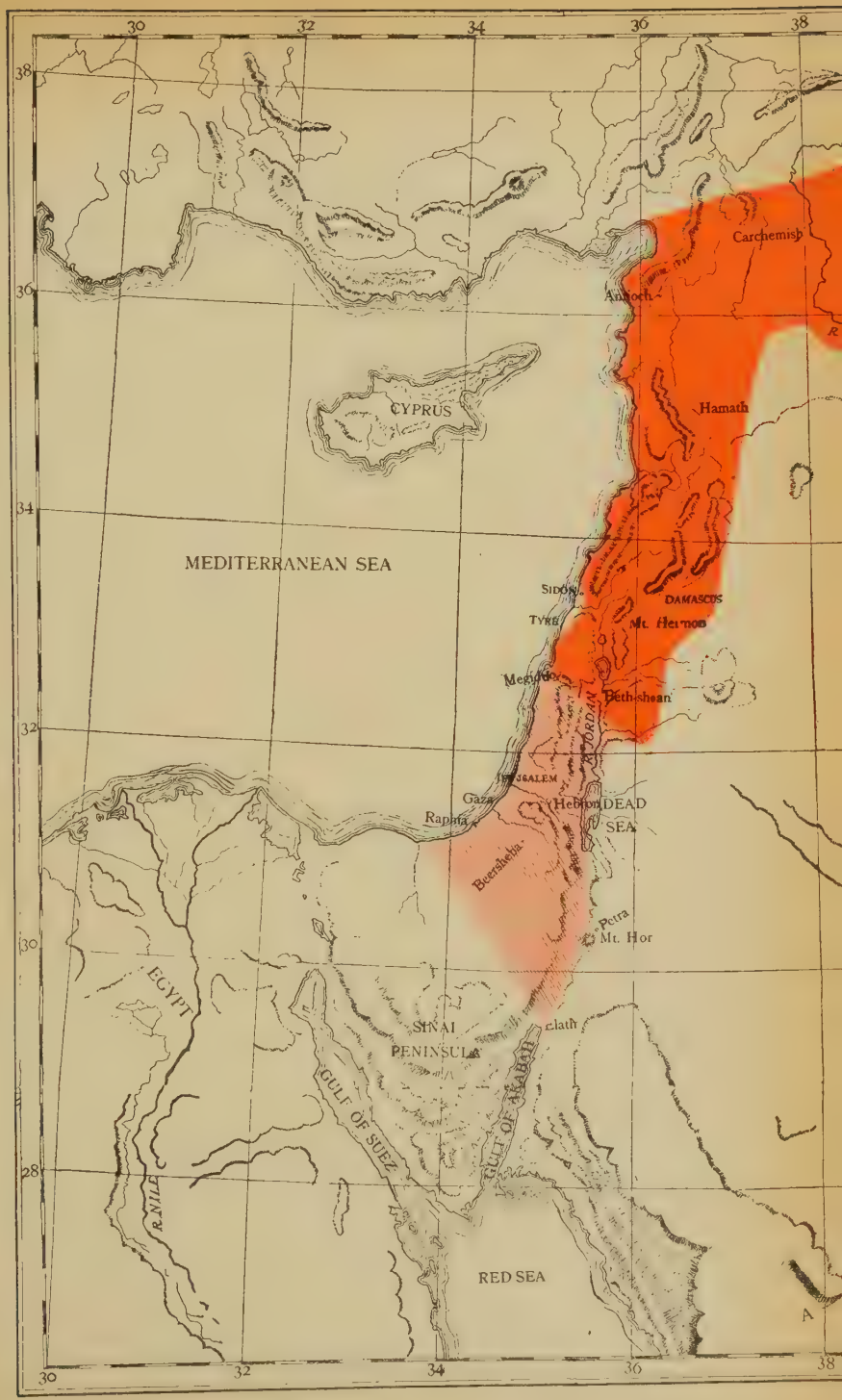
Jeremiah remains with Gedaliah at Mizpeh.

Gedaliah is assassinated by Ishmael, one who refuses to submit to Babylon.

Large numbers, fearing the vengeance of Babylon, flee to Egypt and compel Jeremiah to accompany them.

573 Nebuchadnezzar captures Tyre, after a siege of thirteen years.

568 Nebuchadnezzar invades Egypt and renders impossible further activity on her part in Palestine.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Beth-shean
JORDAN
JERUSALEM
Gaza
Hebron
DEAD SEA
Rafiah
Beersheba
Petra
Mt. Hor
EGYPT
SINAI PENINSULA
Elath
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GULF OF 'AQABAH
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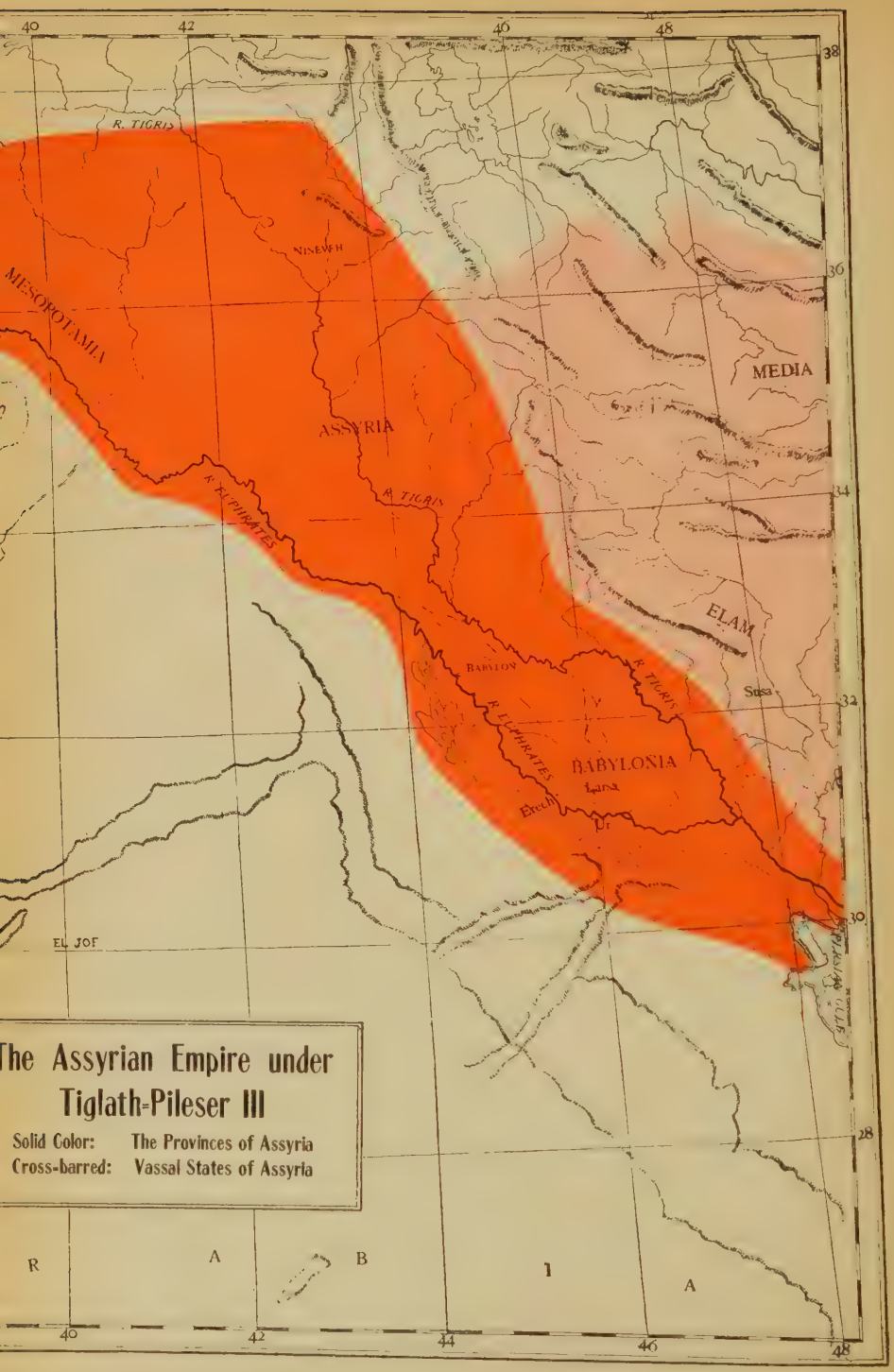
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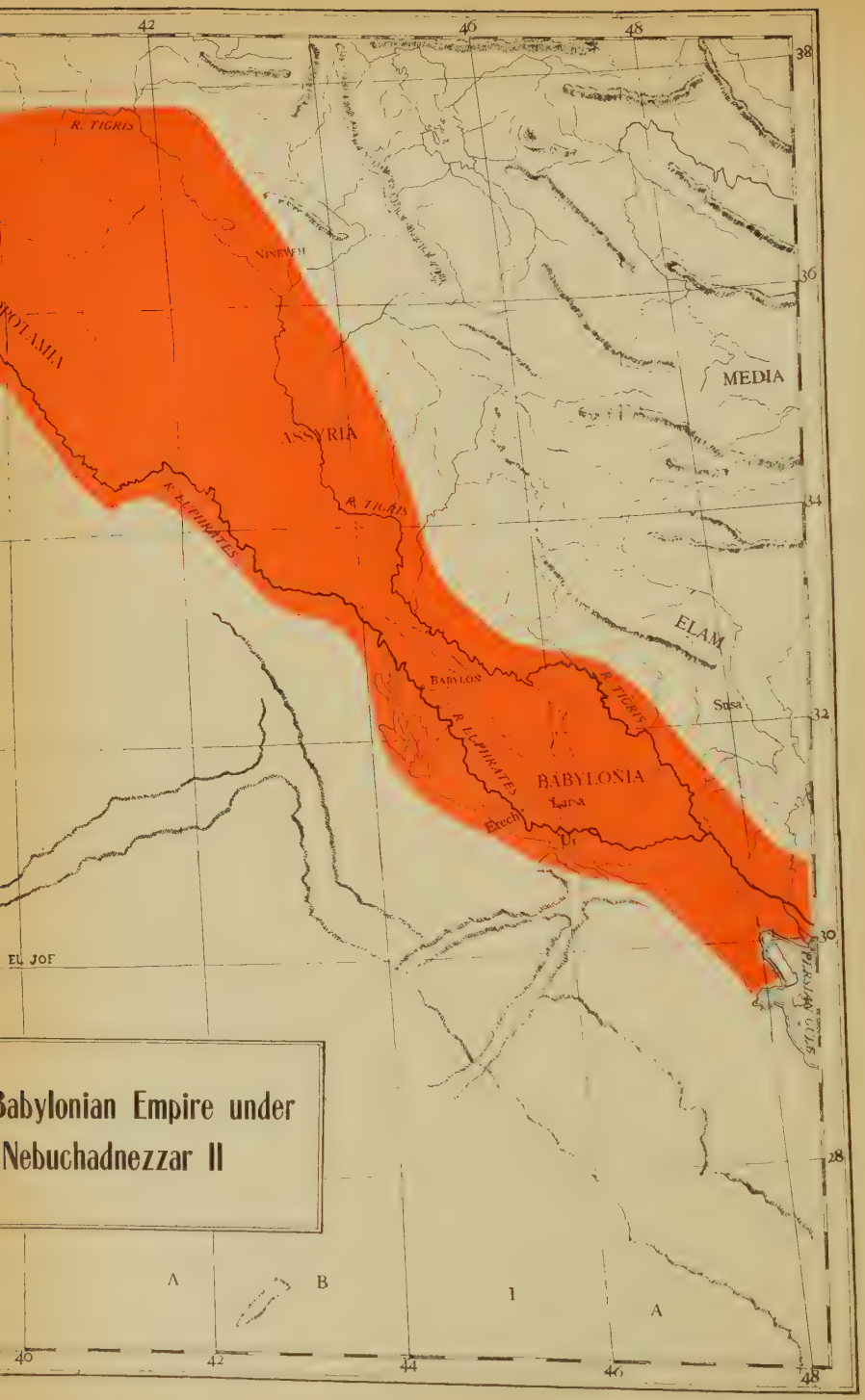
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CHAPTER IX

ISAIAH AND THE ASSYRIAN INVASIONS

The prophets of the century following the time of Hosea wrought in the face and under the shadow of an impending national disaster which colors the work of all of them. Against the background of the Assyrian invasions we see clearly that the fall of Samaria could not long be delayed. Without strong leaders, already a vassal to Assyria, her kings too lacking in discernment to see that in loyalty to Assyria lay their only safety, it was but a question of time when the Assyrian destroyer would have his way. To us who see only the map, with its thirty miles of hill and plain stretching between Samaria and Jerusalem, it seems almost inconceivable that more than one hundred years could elapse before the city of Jerusalem would share the fate of its sister capital. That such was the fact was due not to the strength of the city, nor to the wisdom of her kings, but to the work of the prophets. Believing that Jehovah would never abandon his people, they fed the hopes of the nation, checked the rashness of kings, and by their statesmanlike counsels averted many a disaster.

First, and possibly chief among these men was Isaiah of Jerusalem. The story of his life may be gathered from his writings[1] more fully and clearly than that of any prophet before him. Unlike Amos and Hosea, the field of his activity was in the Southern Kingdom, and chiefly in the city of Jerusalem itself. Separated by only one generation from Amos, growing into manhood within a few miles of the Tekoan home of his predecessor, seeing distinctly what Amos less clearly discerned, the oncoming Assyrian conqueror, his conception of Jehovah, while as uncompromising as that of Amos, was shot through with gleams of hope, and sustained by a faith which proved for the time being the salvation of the nation.

[1] The last twenty-seven chapters of the Book of Isaiah belong to a period much later than that of Isaiah, and reflect a much more advanced conception of God. A literary confusion perhaps of some editor has brought these two distinct books together into one.

We may recall that the Assyrian armies, which were busy in other directions, had left Palestine unmolested for many years, with the result that the reign of Jeroboam II[1] in the North had been as prosperous as it was long. For the same reason Judah in the South, under Uzziah, had extended her territory and developed her resources in undisturbed peace through fifty years. But in both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms, beneath seeming prosperity lay the rottenness of commercial greed, extortion and craft, spendthrift luxury, low ideals of personal and national life, and a formal worship which constantly belied the character of Jehovah.

Riches and pleasure brought with them the same kind of uncontrolled joy that had characterized the life of the North in Jeroboam's day, and this joy found expression in extravagant religious demonstrations. In Jerusalem at the great temple, the worship of Jehovah was dishonored by excesses similar to those accompanying the worship of heathen gods. Throughout the land images were freely used, and the religious zeal of the people was so great that it could not expend itself in the worship of Jehovah alone. But this fanatical religious life was based upon the old sordid conception of God which regarded him as pleased above all with material gifts and elaborate ceremonial. His moral requirements, simple honesty, justice, mercy, and truth, were not apprehended or were disregarded.

The Call of Isaiah[2]

But we must not suppose that no one in Jerusalem had a higher conception of Jehovah. There were doubtless some who had taken to heart the messages of Amos and Hosea, though spoken to their northern neighbors. Some there were who saw the nation weakening under the strain of the debauched life of the people. To Isaiah belonged not only this clearer vision, but the power to act in accordance with it. He has himself given us the story of the hour when it was borne in upon his understanding that he must carry a message to his people. Doubtless the account was written years afterward, and bears the imprint of the prophet's

[1] See pp. 64–70, for conditions under Jeroboam II.

[2] Isa., chap. 6.

later experience, as he looked back upon fruitless labors. But that the story is the description of a real and vital experience we cannot doubt. It makes clear to us the source of that enthusiasm which the passing years transformed into stern and patient determination.

In the year that King Uzziah[1] died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim:[2] each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said,

"Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts;
The whole earth is full of his glory."

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I,

"Woe is me! for I am undone;
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips:
For mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts."[3]

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a hot stone in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said,

"Lo, this hath touched thy lips;
And thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin removed."[4]

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[1] (790–739 B.C.): For the biblical account of the reign of Uzziah or Azariah see II Kings 15:1–7. The death of the king from leprosy, a disease which the Hebrews always regarded as a visitation of the displeasure of Jehovah, would make a strong impression upon a man of Isaiah's type of mind. That he should be found in the temple, absorbed in contemplation and adoration of the holy character of Jehovah, that out of this there should arise an overpowering conviction of duty for himself, and that he should describe his experience, even to himself, in terms of a vision—all this is but natural for a man of Isaiah's deep piety and mystical temperament.

[2] *Seraphim:* This is the only use of the term in either the Old or the New Testaments. There are other allusions in Isaiah to a "fiery flying serpent" which suggest the conclusion that the seraphim of this vision were glowing dragon or serpent forms with wings as described.

[3] *Have seen the king:* The glory of his vision overwhelmed Isaiah with a sense of humiliation, and also of fear, for he recalled the old tradition that, "No man may look upon the face of Jehovah and live."

[4] *Thy sin is removed:* Burned away by the heat of the stone.

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
"Whom shall I send,
And who will go for us?"

Then I said,
"Here am I; send me."

And he said,
"Go, and tell this people,
Go on hearing, but understand not;
Go on seeing, but perceive not.
Make the heart of this people fat,[1]
And make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;
Lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears,
And their heart should understand and they be healed again."

Then said I,
"Lord, how long?"

And he answered,
"Until cities be waste without inhabitant,
And houses without man, and the land be left a desolation,
And Jehovah have removed men far away,
And the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land.
And if there be yet a tenth in it,
It also shall in turn be burnt, like the terebinth,[2] and like the oak,
Whose stock remaineth when they are felled."

A Demand for Reform

The first effect upon the prophet of this vision of holiness was to make still more abhorrent to him the sham and paltriness of the national life, and to strengthen in him the belief that the God of whom he had had a vision would not long bear with such a people. In the menacing Assyrian he saw the instrument of Jehovah's

[1] *Make the heart, etc.:* These imperative commands state rather a great law—that unheeded warnings leave men more callous than before, until their power to heed is lost completely. With the experience of Amos and Hosea behind him Isaiah saw little probability that the people of Judah would listen to his message, or that the destruction of the nation would be less complete than that of a tree when the stump is burned. Can we overestimate the courage of a man who would undertake so hopeless a task?

[2] *Terebinth:* A tree common in Palestine, but somewhat less so than the oak.

wrath descending in punishment upon his people. But to Isaiah punishment was an instrument of reform, not an act of vengeance. He felt that the nation was not to be utterly destroyed, but to be regenerated. Faith and hope were ever his strongest allies. Never despairing, he threw himself into a fight for moral and religious reform, seeking to startle the nation from its fancied security, and to make a remnant of the people fit to survive the destruction which he so clearly foresaw. The following selection will serve to illustrate this early campaign of Isaiah against the social evils of his day.

[1] For, behold, the Lord, Jehovah of hosts,
Doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah stay and staff,
The whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,
The mighty man, and the man of war;
The judge, and the prophet, and the diviner, and the elder:
The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor,
And the expert charmer, and the skilful enchanter.

And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.
And the people shall be oppressed, one by another, and each by his neighbour:
The child shall behave himself proudly against the old man, and the base against the honourable.
When a man shall take hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying,
"Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler,
And let this ruin be under thy hand."

In that day shall he lift up his voice, saying,
"I will not be a healer;
For in my house is neither bread nor clothing:
Ye shall not make me ruler of the people."

[1] Isa. 3:1–15 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission). This passage enumerates all the different classes of leaders in commercial, social, and religious life. It pictures them swept away, and superseded by inexperienced and childish leaders, whose only qualification for their position is the fact that they can afford to possess the necessary garments of state.

For Jerusalem is ruined,[1] and Judah is fallen:
Because their tongue and their doings are against Jehovah,
To provoke the eyes of his glory.
Their respecting of persons doth witness against them;
And they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not.[2]
Woe unto their soul! For they have done evil unto themselves.

Happy is the righteous, for it is well with him:
For they shall eat the fruit of their doings.
Woe unto the wicked! it is ill with him:
For what his hands have done shall be done unto him.

As for my people, children are their oppressors,
And women rule over them.
O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err,
And destroy the way of thy paths.

Jehovah standeth up to contend,
And standeth to judge the people,
Jehovah will enter into judgment
With the elders of his people, and the princes thereof:

"It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard;
The spoil of the poor is in your houses:
What mean ye that ye crush my people,
And grind the face of the poor?"

Isaiah Pronounces the Doom of Israel

Isaiah tells us that he undertook his work in the year that King Uzziah died. Jotham,[3] Uzziah's son, succeeded to the throne. Perhaps in his reign, but certainly in the early years of that of his son Ahaz,[4] the combined armies of Northern Israel and Syria

[1] *For Jerusalem is ruined:* This is not a lament over a city already fallen, but a picture of disaster so imminent as to make the prophet's words bring trembling to the hearts of his hearers.

[2] Lines 21, 22: "Anyone who looks can see their sin." It can no longer be hidden. The leaders are the most conspicuous sinners of all. Upon them rests the responsibility of having led the nation astray.

[3] *Jotham* (739–735 B.C.): For the biblical account of his reign see II Kings 15:32–38.

[4] *Ahaz* (735–715 B.C.): For the biblical account of his reign see II Kings 16:1–20.

invaded Judah, carrying dismay to the hearts of king and people. The prophet seized upon this opportunity to impress his message of moral and social reform, proclaiming that the wickedness of both Israel and Judah was the cause of their misfortunes. War he declared to be but the expression of Jehovah's chastening anger.

[1]The Lord sent a word against Jacob,
And it hath lighted upon Israel.
And all the people shall know,
Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria,
That say in pride and in stoutness of heart,[2]
"The bricks are fallen, but we will build with hewn stone:
The sycamores are cut down, but we will put cedars in their place."
Therefore Jehovah will raise up enemies against him,
And will goad on his foes;
The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind;
And they shall devour Israel with open mouth.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand is stretched out still.[3]

Yet the people turn not unto him that smiteth them,
Neither seek they Jehovah of hosts.
Therefore Jehovah will cut off from Israel head and tail,
Palm-branch and rush, in one day.
For they that lead this people cause them to err;
And they that are led of them are destroyed.
Therefore the Lord will not rejoice over their young men,
Neither will he have compassion on their fatherless and widows:
For every one is profane and an evil-doer,
And every mouth speaketh folly.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand is stretched out still.[4]

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[1] Isa. 9:8—10:4; 5:26–30.

[2] Lines 1–5: Samaria had already suffered greatly, having been compelled to pour her treasure into the coffers of Tiglath-pileser, the king of Assyria. The words "stoutness of heart" well expressed the persistence with which these Palestinian cities held to their hope of renewed prosperity.

[3] Lines 13, 25: Note the impressive sternness of these lines which constitute a refrain appearing at the end of each strophe.

[4] Strophe 2: As it was in Judah, so in Samaria, it is the leaders whom the prophet arraigns.

For wickedness burneth as the fire;
It devoureth the briers and thorns;
Yea, it kindleth in the thickets of the forest,
And they roll upward in a column of smoke.
Through the wrath of Jehovah of hosts is the land burnt up:
The people are as the fuel of fire.
No man spareth his brother;[1]
And one shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry;
And he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied:
They shall eat every man the flesh of his neighbor;
Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh:
And they together shall be against Judah.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand is stretched out still.

Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees,
And to the writers that write perverseness:
To turn aside the needy from justice,
And to rob the poor of my people of their right;
That widows may be their spoil,
And that they may plunder orphans!
And what will ye do in the day of visitation,
And in the desolation which shall come from far?
To whom will ye flee for help!
And where will ye leave your possessions?
So as not to bow down under the prisoners,
And fall under the slain.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand is stretched out still.[2]

And again the prophet says:

And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far,
And will hiss for them from the end of the earth:
And, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:
None shall be weary, nor stumble among them:
None shall slumber nor sleep;

[1] Strophe 3: A picture of anarchy, greed, and blind strife introduced under the imagery of a forest fire. "Neither shall Judah escape in this general turmoil," says the prophet.

[2] Strophe 4: "To whom will the unjust legislators turn when the more distant nation comes with its visitation of desolation?"

Neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed,
Nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:
Whose arrows are sharp,
And all their bows bent;
Their horses' hoofs shall be accounted as flint,
And their wheels as a whirlwind:
Their roaring shall be like a lioness,
They shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar,
And lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe,
And there shall be none to deliver.
And they shall roar over them in that day like the roaring of the sea:
And if one look unto the land, behold darkness and distress,
And the light is darkened in the clouds thereof.[1]

Isaiah Fighting a Foreign Alliance

The invasion of Northern Israel and Syria, which brought such fear in its train, seems certainly to have been due to the intention of the two northern nations to force Ahaz of Judah into a triple confederacy against Assyria, of whom the northern nations were rebellious vassals. Ahaz was reluctant but frightened. Should he refuse the demand, he was not prepared to maintain war against the combined forces of Israel and Syria. On the other hand, he was too good a statesman to fail to see that even with his aid the trio could not hold back such a formidable foe as Assyria. By an appeal to Assyria herself, however, he might be able to get rid of his neighboring foes, and at the same time forestall any attack from Assyria. This is the situation which confronted the king when Isaiah,[2] already a man who commanded the respectful attention of the royal household, assumed a definitely political rôle, seeking to keep the nation free from foreign alliances, and in comparatively safe neutrality.

In the accounts which follow we see the prophet striving to

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[1] *Lines 55–70: Note the wonderful description of the oncoming of an army, swift and sure The prophet here represents Jehovah as actually calling the foreign army to execute his purpose. He does not merely allow it to come.

[2] *Isaiah:* We have no definite knowledge of the family or position of Isaiah. We may infer, however, from the close relation which he held to the king, even when arrayed against him, that he was of good family and familiar with the life of the court.

reassure Ahaz, to persuade him to rely upon Jehovah alone, and to show him that he has nothing to fear from the fast decaying nations on the north. Isaiah's faith in the truth of his message led him to employ expedients peculiar to himself. He not only spoke words of counsel, but enforced them by illustration. By the very names which he gave to his children he kept before the people a continual reminder of his message. Upon one occasion, we are told, Ahaz was returning from an inspection of the water supply of the city, preparatory to a possible siege. Isaiah, going out to meet him, took with him his son whom he called by the symbolical name "Shear-jashub" (a remnant shall turn). He exhorted Ahaz to take courage, for the record tells us "the heart of Ahaz was moved, and the hearts of his people, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind." Says Isaiah:

[1]Take heed and be quiet;
Fear not, neither let thy heart be faint,
Because of these two tails of smoking fire-brands,
For the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.[2]
Because Syria hath counselled evil against thee,
Ephraim also, and the son of Remaliah, saying,
"Let us go up against Judah and vex it,
And let us make a breach therein for us,
And set up a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeel."[3]

Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,
"It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.
For the head of Syria is Damascus,
And the head of Damascus is Rezin:
And the head of Ephraim is Samaria,
And the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son."[4]

But the king was already considering what seemed to him the one open door of safety, an appeal to Assyria, and the attempt of

[1] Isa. 7:4–9 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] * *Son of Remaliah:* A contemptuous way of naming Pekah, king of Israel.

[3] * *Son of Tabeel*: Perhaps a rival of Ahaz, who was willing to be subservient to the will of Rezin and Pekah.

[4] Summary: "Do not fear, Ahaz. These two nations whom you so greatly dread will certainly be destroyed. They are already like burnt-out firebrands."

Isaiah to turn him aside from his strengthening purpose was unsuccessful.

The days passed. Again we find the prophet, this time perhaps in the court, before the king and his assembled household, offering to perform some sign[1] which should attest the validity of his message as coming from Jehovah, for like his predecessors, Isaiah could conceive of himself only as the direct representative of Jehovah. But Ahaz, possibly having already made his appeal to Assyria, claimed superiority to any such requirement.

Ahaz said, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah."
And Isaiah said,

[2]"Hear ye now, O house of David: is it a small thing for
you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also?
Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign;
Behold, a young woman shall bear a son,
And shall call his name Immanuel.[3]
Butter and honey shall he eat,[4]
When he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good.
For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose
the good,[5]
The land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken."

Later the prophet, convinced that Ahaz has already made the alliance which he was striving to avert, again appeared before the king with a bitter denunciation. He presented a picture of devastation at the hands of Assyria which plainly showed that he understood the situation. With keener insight than Ahaz he foresaw that the destruction which the appeal of Ahaz would precipitate upon the Northern Kingdom would not stop there. It must sweep through Judah and leave the land shaved with the very razor which the king had hired to destroy his enemies.

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[1] *A sign:* Some sign of the authenticity of a prophet's message was very commonly given. Isaiah offered to give such a sign in heaven or on earth. See Isa. 7:10, 11.

[2] Isa. 7:12–16. Again a prophecy of destruction for the Northern nations.

[3] **Immanuel:* "God is with us." This might be a comfort or a menace, according to whether Jehovah should come as a defense or in judgment.

[4] **Butter and honey:* The natural simple food of the land, all other resources being gone.

[5] **When he knoweth to choose, etc.:* Would it be at about five or six years of age?

[1]Jehovah will bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah;[2] even the king of Assyria.

And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the Lord will hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt,
And for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.[3]
And they shall come, and shall rest all of them
In the desolate valleys, and in the clefts of the rocks,
And upon all thorn-hedges, and upon all pastures.

In that day will the Lord shave
With a razor that is hired in the parts beyond the River, even with the king of Assyria,
The head and the hair of the feet;
And it shall also consume the beard.[4]

And it shall come to pass in that day,
That a man shall keep alive a young cow, and two sheep:
And it shall come to pass, that because of the abundance of the yield of milk he shall eat butter:
For butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the midst of the land.[5]

And it shall come to pass in that day,
That every place where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings,
Shall even be for briers and thorns.
With arrows and with bow shall one come thither;
Because all the land shall be brier and thorns.
And all the hills that were digged with the mattock,

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[1] Isa. 7:17–25; 8:5–8 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] *Ephraim departed from Judah:* The kingdom was divided at the death of Solomon.

[3] Lines 5–10: Note the striking figure of Jehovah calling the nations as a bee-master calls the bees, and with the same quick response.

[4] Lines 11–15: The figure changes to one which will represent the complete devastation of the land.

[5] Lines 15–18: Only the natural products of the land, the wild honey and the milk of one cow and two goats, will be needed to nourish the people who remain after the foreign army has swept over it.

Thou shalt not come thither for fear of briers and thorns.
But it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the
treading of sheep."[1]

And the Lord spake unto me yet again, saying,

"Forasmuch as this people hath refused
The waters of Shiloah[2] that go softly,
And faint because of Rezin, and Remaliah's son;
Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them
The waters of the River,[3] strong and many,
Even the king of Assyria and all his mass;
And it shall come up over all its channels,
And go over all its banks:
And it shall sweep onward into Judah and shall overflow
And shall pass through, reaching even to the neck;
And the stretching out of its wings shall fill
The breadth of thy land, O Immanuel."[4]

Graphically and more publicly, at still another time the prophet pictured the coming destruction.[5] Taking a great tablet he wrote upon it the words, Maher-shalal-hash-baz,[6] a combination of words which, in view of the encroachments of Assyria, was calculated to strike terror to all who read them. Another child of the prophet received the words as his name, and the father announced, "before the child shall have knowledge to cry[7] 'My father' and 'My mother'

[1] Lines 20–26: The vineyards will be fit only for hunting-fields, and the gardens for wild pasture.

[2] **Waters of Shiloah:* A figure drawn from the pool and spring which watered the Temple hill in Jerusalem, used to represent the gently refreshing and supporting but forgotten presence of Jehovah.

[3] **Waters of the River:* i.e., the great river, the Euphrates, representing the Assyrian army.

[4] *Immanuel:* The name is here perhaps used with some irony, as meaning that Jehovah's presence is now an occasion of punishment instead of deliverance, as it might have been had Ahaz heeded the prophet's advice.

[5] Isa. 8:1–4.

[6] *Maher-shalal-hash-baz:* "the spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth."

[7] **Knowledge to cry, etc.:* Would this be at about two years of age? We cannot fix the actual date of these prophecies. It is apparent however that the fall of Samaria has become more imminent since the last child prophecy. Possibly the end did not come quite as soon as Isaiah had expected, for no man could have considered Samaria able to endure the three years' siege by the Assyrians which ended in her destruction in 721 B.C.

the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away by the king of Assyria."

The Fall of Damascus and Samaria

What in fact was the effect of the appeal of Ahaz to the Assyrians? Tiglath-pileser, the king of Assyria, welcoming the opportunity to punish Damascus and Samaria for their rebellion, promptly marched westward. In 734 B.C. he invaded Northern Israel, left a weak vassal on the throne, and in 732 B.C. took Damascus, the Syrian capital. Judah was saved for the moment. The price which she paid in gold and in submission is briefly suggested in II Kings 16:7–9. Ahaz had gained a respite but lost his independence. In all probability he was as fast bound to the Assyrian monarch by annual tribute, and more active surveillance, as the vassal king of rebellious Northern Israel. We read of a friendly meeting[1] of Ahaz and Tiglath-pileser at Damascus, where the conqueror received his vassals, and interchange of courtesies took place, but these could hardly atone for the loss of Judah's ancient freedom. Neither was there prospect of long-continued protection under the patronage of the treacherous Assyrian.

The death of Tiglath-pileser in 727 B.C.[2] gave another opportunity for rebellion in Northern Israel. The older civilization of Egypt, for centuries in earlier days the overlord of Palestine, had never lost its attraction for the Palestinian kings. So,[3] the king of Egypt persuaded Northern Israel to withhold the annual tribute from the new king of Assyria, Shalmaneser IV.[4] The punishment was swift and sure. Siege was laid against Samaria. Because of her wonderful location upon the hills, the city was able to hold the Assyrian outside her walls for three years, and at last when her exhausted and starving people surrendered, it was not to Shalmaneser, but to his general and successor, Sargon. Twenty-seven

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[1] II Kings 16:10.

[2] **Tiglath-pileser* (745–727 B.C.): Study the map and note the extent of the actual conquest of this king as well as his tributary states.

[3] II Kings 17:4.

[4] **Shalmaneser IV.* (727–722 B.C.) *and Sargon* (722–705 B.C.).

thousand Hebrews were deported to Assyria, and their places filled by a mixed company of captives of war from other lands, fruits of recent conquests of the Assyrian kings (721 B.C.).

Isaiah's message was vindicated. The northern cities were no more, but the barriers which these two hostile nations had interposed between Judah and Assyria were swept away, and the territory of Judah lay open to the common foe.

Isaiah Fighting an Egyptian Alliance

For ten years our records give us no clue to the work of Isaiah, but we can imagine him zealously prosecuting his moral reforms, and counseling the king to be loyal to his overlord, that he might escape the fate of his northern neighbors.

In 711 B.C. another coalition, this time headed by the cities of Philistia, was attempted. Perhaps the influence of Isaiah kept Judah out of this conspiracy for a time, but on the death of Sargon, the revolt became so general that Judah seems to have been swept into the insurrection. A strong party favoring appeal to Egypt is found in Jerusalem. Isaiah saw the futility of the dream, for he not only believed that Egypt too would fall into the hands of the world-conquering Assyrian, but that the strength of Jehovah alone would suffice for his people. His faith in the power and the will of Jehovah to save his nation was supreme in every crisis, and appeal to an outside nation seemed to him nothing less than an insult to Jehovah. Discarding his outer garment, appearing in the garb of a captive of war, he walked the streets barefooted for the three years of the uncertain outcome of the conspiracy. His words explain his act:

> [1]"And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked uncovered and barefoot three years *for a sign*, so shall the king of Assyria lead away the captives of Egypt uncovered and barefoot, to the shame of Egypt. . . . . And the inhabitant of the coast land shall say in that day, Behold such is our expectation, whither we fled for help from the Assyrian: and we, how shall we escape?"

[1] Isaiah 20:3, 4, 6.

Isaiah and the Campaign of Sennacherib[1]

Sargon's son and successor, Sennacherib, was a general no less able than Sargon himself. After a swift conquest of rebellious subjects in the east Sennacherib turned to the west. Down the Mediterranean coast he marched, taking city after city as he passed. Phoenicia and Philistia were quickly reduced to subjection. Judah lay off the main route of the march, but toward her Sennacherib turned after his coast campaign. In one of his inscriptions the Assyrian monarch tells us that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, then upon the throne of Judah, saw forty-six of his fortified cities fall into the hands of the Assyrians. Sending messengers to treat with the conqueror, Hezekiah purchased temporary peace at the cost of a tribute so vast as to impoverish the kingdom, but the relief was of short duration. Sennacherib feared to trust a Palestinian king. In a little while his armies appeared at the gates of Jerusalem demanding unconditional surrender.

Previous to this fresh invasion we find no allusions to Isaiah after we saw him walking the streets of Jerusalem in the garb of a captive of war, reminding the people of the fate which awaited the nation in whom they were seeking to put their trust. Perhaps the earlier overtures of Hezekiah were the result of his wise counsels. We cannot believe that he was silent or without influence during those years. But a terrible crisis was now at hand. Isaiah maintained more firmly than ever his belief that Jehovah was but punishing and disciplining Judah, and that he would not allow his city to fall into the hands of the enemy. He could not conceive of Jehovah without a city in which to dwell. The sight of the people rushing to the Temple with their offerings, crowding its courts, and falling over each other in their eagerness to approach Jehovah, and to placate him with offerings disgusted him and filled him with despair. He arraigned and pleaded:

1 [2]Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,
For Jehovah hath spoken;

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[1] **Sennacherib* (705–681 B.C.): Study the map as before. Note with care the extent of the territory of Assyria at this time. One of the phenomenal events of history is the downfall of this nation, soon to become apparent.

[2] Isaiah 1: 2–26 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission, with revisions).

BAS-RELIEFS SHOWING ASSYRIAN SOLDIERS ATTACKING A CITY

"I have nourished and brought up children,
And they have rebelled against me.
The ox knoweth his owner,
And the ass his master's crib;
But Israel doth not know,
My people doth not consider."[1]

II Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity,
A seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly:
They have forsaken Jehovah,
They have despised the Holy One of Israel,
Why will ye be still stricken,
That ye revolt more and more?[2]

III The whole head is sick,
And the whole heart faint.
From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it;
But wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes:
They have not been closed, neither bound up,
Neither mollified with oil.[3]

IV Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire;
Your land, strangers devour it in your presence,
And it is desolate, like the overthrow of Sodom.
And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard,
As a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.
Except Jehovah of hosts had left unto us a remnant,
We should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah."[4]

V Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom;
Give ear unto the teaching of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.
"What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices?"
saith Jehovah.

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[1] Strophe 1: Let all the world see that my people have ceased to know me.

[2] Strophe 2: They have forsaken me in their sin.

[3] Strophe 3: You are a sick and wounded nation. Why do you continue in your way of independence courting fresh injury?

[4] Strophe 4: Your city stands alone and unprotected. Only by a remnant are we saved from the total destruction which visited Sodom and Gomorrah.

"I am sated with the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat
of fed beasts;
And I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs or
of he-goats.

VI "When ye come to appear before me,
Who hath required this at your hand, to trample my
courts?
Bring no more the vain oblation;
It is a loathsome incense unto me;
New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—
I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn meeting.

VII "Your new moons and your appointed feasts
My soul hateth:
They are a cumbrance to me;
I am weary of bearing them.
When ye spread forth your hands,
I will hide mine eyes from you:
Yea, when ye make many prayers,
I will not hear:[1]

VIII "Your hands are full of blood.
Wash you, make you clean;
Put away the evil of your doings
From before mine eyes;
Cease to do evil:
Learn to do well.
Seek justice,
Relieve the oppressed,
Judge the orphan,
Plead for the widow.[2]

IX "Come now, and let us reason together,"
Saith Jehovah;[3]
"If your sins be as scarlet,
Can they be as white as snow?
If they be red like crimson
Can they be as wool?

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[1] Strophes 5, 6, 7: Your multitudinous sacrifices and ceremonials avail nothing and are a weariness to me.

[2] Strophe 8: I will not accept your petitions until they are presented with clean hands and pure hearts.

If ye be willing and obedient,
Ye shall eat the good of the land:
But if ye refuse and rebel,
Ye shall be devoured with the sword."
For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.[1]

X [2] How is the faithful city
Become an harlot!
She that was full of judgment!
Righteousness lodged in her,
But now murderers.
Thy silver is become dross,
Thy wine mixed with water.

XI Thy princes are rebellious,
And companions of thieves:
Every one loveth bribes,
And followeth after rewards:
They judge not the orphan,
Neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

XII Therefore saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts,
The Mighty One of Israel,
"Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries,
And avenge me of mine enemies:
And I will bring my hand again upon thee,
And as with lye purge away thy dross,
And will take away all thine alloy.
And I will restore thy judges as at the first,
And thy counsellors as at the beginning:
Afterward thou shalt be called The City of Righteousness,
The Faithful City."

Thus we see Isaiah as before in act and word making clear to the faithful his hope and establishing their confidence in the very face of despair. A letter from the king of Assyria about to besiege the city of Hezekiah reads as follows:

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[1] Strophe 9: You must choose between forgiveness and obedience on the one hand and rebellion and punishment on the other.

[2] The remainder of this poem constitutes a dirge in the regular elegiac measure which is evident only in the Hebrew. Note that Isaiah holds firmly to his belief that eventually the city will be cleansed and purified and restored. Can we appreciate the strength of his faith in this respect?

[1]Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?[2] Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah?

Hezekiah's prayer as he presented his outspread letter before Jehovah was that of a sincere man.

[3]And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of Jehovah, and spread it before Jehovah, saying, O Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, that sittest upon the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to defy the living God. Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the countries, and their land, and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, Jehovah, our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou Jehovah art the Lord, even thou only.

Can we comprehend the situation? The Assyrian army encamped within sight of the city. Hezekiah as Sennacherib's

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[1] Isa. 37:10–13.

[2] All the cities of this paragraph were located either in Assyria or Syria and although unknown for the most part to us were to Hezekiah probably conspicuous testimony to the power of the Assyrian king.

[3] Isa. 37:14–20. Study this prayer, and note in it the hope, the conception of the unique character of Jehovah among the gods of the earth, and an appreciation of his relation to all the nations of the earth which could only be attributed to the influence of some great soul like that of Isaiah whose vision of Jehovah far transcended the common thought of his day.

own inscription tells us, "shut up like a bird in a cage, in Jerusalem, his royal city." No help from north, east, south, or west; the city despoiled of her treasure; the people disheartened and dying; the army reduced to a remnant. Why should the evil but inevitable day of surrender be postponed? Had not Jehovah at last forsaken his people?

In this unprecedented crisis Isaiah's faith rises triumphant. He sends the answer of Jehovah to the prayer of Hezekiah. Read the majestic words addressed to the arrogant Assyrian conqueror.

[1]Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, this is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him:

"The virgin daughter of Zion
Hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn;
The daughter of Jerusalem
Hath shaken her head at thee.
Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed?
And against whom hast thou exalted thy voice
And lifted up thine eyes on high?
Even against the Holy One of Israel.

"By thy servants hast thou defied Jehovah
And thou hast said,
'With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains,
To the innermost parts of Lebanon;
And I will cut down the tall cedars thereof,
And the choice fir trees thereof;
And I will enter into its farthest height,
The forest of its fruitful field.
I have digged and drunk water,
And with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt.'

[1] Isa. 37: 21–29 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission). Here we have again in the Hebrew the elegiac measure in a song of not only the ultimate doom of Assyria and Egypt, but of the immediate humiliation of Assyria, followed by the most definite promises of deliverance for Jerusalem and the future building-up of the nation. Only by getting the situation clearly in mind can we appreciate the strength and the temerity of Isaiah in this crisis.

"Hast thou not heard how I have done it long ago;
And formed it of ancient times?
Now have I brought it to pass,
That thou art to lay waste fortified cities
Into ruinous heaps:
Therefore their inhabitants were of small power,
They were dismayed and confounded;
They were as the grass of the field,
And as the green herb,
As the grass on the housetops, and as a field of grain
Before it be grown up.

"But, I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in,
And thy raging against me.
Because of thy raging against me,
And because thine arrogancy is come up into mine ears,
Therefore will I put my hook in thy nose,[1]
And my bridle in thy lips,
And I will turn thee back by the way
By which thou camest."

Strong words of comfort and promise to Judah follow:[2]

Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria,
"He shall not come into this city,
Nor shoot an arrow there,
Neither shall he come before it with shield,
Nor cast up a mound against it.
By the way that he came, by the same shall he return,
And he shall not come unto this city," saith Jehovah.
For I will defend this city to save it,
For mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

"And this shall be the sign unto thee:
Ye shall eat this year that which groweth of itself,
And in the second year that which springeth of the same;
And in the third year sow ye, and reap,
And plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

[1] A common method of treatment on the part of the Assyrian conquerors toward their prisoners. Such scenes may be found in Assyrian bas-reliefs.

[2] Isa. 37:30–35.

15 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah
Shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.
For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant,
And out of mount Zion they that shall escape:
The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.

Was the word of the prophet vindicated? One verse in the record tells all the story:

> And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.[1]

What was the terrible visitation? No one knows. From a portion of another narrative we learn that Sennacherib returned to Assyria, and did not again visit Palestine. If the dread scourge was in the form of a pestilence he may in those days of superstition have easily attributed it to the vengeance of Judah's God, and have refrained from venturing into his territory. The picturesque conclusion of the biblical narrative leaves ample room for the imagination to picture the disaster that overtook the Assyrian army.

Isaiah Again Demanding Reform

We have few messages from Isaiah after the marvelous escape recounted above. We might easily suppose that the influence of the prophet would have been greatly increased by such wonderful testimony to his insight and power to interpret Jehovah's plans. That he returned to his mission of social regeneration we cannot doubt. Listen to his Song of the Vineyard,[2] voicing his disappointment in the results of his work:

Let me sing of my well-beloved
A song of my beloved touching his vineyard.

My well-beloved had a vineyard
In a very fruitful hill:

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[1] Isa. 37:36.

[2] Isa. 5:2–8 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

And he digged it, and gathered out the stones thereof,
And planted it with the choicest vine,
And built a tower in the midst of it,
And also hewed out a winepress therein:
And he looked that it should bring forth grapes,
And it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem,
And men of Judah,
Judge, I pray you, between me
And my vineyard.
What could have been done more to my vineyard,
That I have not done in it?
Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes,
Brought it forth wild grapes?

And now, I will tell you
What I will do to my vineyard:
I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned:
I will break down its wall, and it shall be trodden down:
And I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed;
But there shall come up briers and thorns:
I will also command the clouds
That they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah the plant of his delight:
And he looked for justice, but behold oppression;
For righteousness, but behold a cry.

We do not know when Isaiah completed his work. Hezekiah was succeeded by his son Manasseh, a man who made Jerusalem a mere outpost of Assyria. Tradition ascribes to him a persecution of the prophets of Jehovah in an attempt to silence their protesting voices. So influential a man as Isaiah would hardly escape in such a persecution. We can only surmise the end. But was it the end? Can we today realize how the thoughts and ideals of Isaiah have permeated our own civic and religious life? Clean politics, cautious statesmanship, international fidelity, the courage and calmness of profound conviction in political crises, all these are Isaiah's contribution to our national ideals. Clean lips, a pure

heart, and undying faith and hope in the wisdom and strength of Jehovah are the heritage which we as individuals may make our own.

As for Isaiah the man, he stands as the poet, orator, prophet, statesman, and idealist of his age, without a peer among the prophets of his day, and perhaps we may safely say unsurpassed by those of any land or time.[1]

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[1] When a man ever reaching out for more truth has faithfully lived up to all the truth he knows, is it right for later generations to condemn him because he failed to see all the truth which later ages have learned? Parents are sometimes as great as the children who in the light of a later generation have reached a new realm of facts. In other words is it knowledge which makes men great, or qualities of character? Although later history shows Isaiah mistaken in his dream of the inviolability of Jerusalem, the glory of his character and his clearer conception of Jehovah remain undimmed through the barrier of twenty centuries.

CHAPTER X

MICAH OF MORESHETH

The writings of Isaiah give a vivid picture of conditions in Jerusalem under siege. We must not overlook the fact that there were many Hebrew towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem which were not protected by walls and fortifications as was the greater city. Upon these fell the horrors of war in fullest measure. Villages were devastated or burned, crops consumed by soldiers, and agriculture brought to a standstill. Owners of great estates had fled to the city for safety, and the poor were left without means of support or defense. Even in times of peace social conditions outside Jerusalem were very different from those within its walls. Rich landowners preferred to live in the city rather than upon their greater estates. The country people supplied in large measure the food for the city. The agriculturist was at the mercy of his richer neighbor, and there was every opportunity for the gratification of greed and the practice of extortion and tyranny. Thus there was ever a touch of bitterness in the attitude of the countrymen toward the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Micah of Moresheth, a prophet whose home was in the midst of the fertile plain of the Philistines to the southwest of Jerusalem, has left us a few fragments[1] which reflect this attitude toward the city, as well as a less sanguine view of her fate than that of Isaiah. The details of his eventful life we cannot even conjecture, but the boldness of his words may well have brought to him both friends and enemies. Like Isaiah he saw destruction descending upon Samaria, and interpreted it as a visitation of Jehovah on account of her sins.

> Hear, all ye people;
> Hearken, O earth, and all that therein is:
> And let the Lord Jehovah be witness against you,
> The Lord from his holy temple.

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[1] Selections are here given from chaps. 1 and 3.

For behold, Jehovah cometh forth out of his place,
And will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.
And the mountains shall be melted under him,
And the valleys shall be cleft,
As wax before the fire,
As waters that are poured down a steep place.

For the transgression of Jacob is all this,
And for the sins of the house of Israel.
What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria?
"Therefore will I make Samaria as a heap of the field,
And as places for planting vineyards:
And I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley,
And I will uncover the foundations thereof."[1]

Isaiah reared in the very shadow of the Temple courts could only believe that Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, must maintain an inviolable dwelling-place among his people. To Micah, this same city of Jerusalem was synonymous with tyranny and oppression, greed and dishonesty, heaped-up riches, gathered in the fields of his neighbors—a city too corrupt for Jehovah to endure. When therefore Sennacherib came marching down the coast he saw no hope for Jerusalem. He cries:

"I will lament and wail,
I will go stripped and uncovered:[2]
I will make a wailing like the jackals,
And a lamentation like the ostriches.[3]
For her wound is incurable;
For it is come unto Judah;
It reacheth unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem."

His denunciations have in them a ring of fierceness which is almost personal and we wonder what tragic experiences lie back

[1] Jehovah is here represented as having a contention with his people, which will bring him to the earth, with great upheavals of nature in his train. In the midst of this terrible visitation Samaria will be destroyed.

[2] *Stripped and uncovered*: That is, without an outer garment. Recall Isaiah's symbolic act in connection with the proposed alliance with Egypt. There is no note of hope in Micah's lamentation.

[3] *Like the ostriches:* The allusion is to the shrill cry of these birds.

of them. The ruling classes receive no more bitter arraignment than their leaders, the false prophets, who "cry, peace, when there is no peace." Did Micah perhaps include Isaiah in this class of false leaders, because of his promise of the deliverance of Jerusalem?

"Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob,
And rulers of the house of Israel;
Is it not for you to know justice?
Ye who hate the good, and love the evil:
Who pluck their skin from off them,
And their flesh from off their bones;
Who also eat the flesh of my people,
And flay their skin from off them,
And break their bones,
And chop them in pieces as for the pot,
And as flesh within the cauldron."
Then[1] shall they cry unto Jehovah, but he will not answer them:
Yea, he will hide his face from them at that time.
According as they have wrought evil in their doings.

Thus saith Jehovah concerning the prophets that make my people err,
That bite with their teeth and cry, Peace,
And whoso putteth not into their mouths,
They even declare war against him.
"Therefore it shall be night unto you, that ye shall have no vision;
And it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine;
And the sun shall go down upon the prophets,
And the day shall be dark over them.
And the seers shall be put to shame and the diviners confounded.
Yea, they shall all cover their lips;
For there is no answer of God."
But as for me, I am full of power by the spirit of Jehovah,
And of judgment, and of might,
To declare unto Jacob his transgression,
And to Israel his sin.

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[1] *Then:* The prophet here looks forward to the day of punishment which he believes to be at hand.

Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob,
And rulers of the house of Israel,
That abhor justice, and pervert all equity,
They build up Zion with blood,
And Jerusalem with iniquity.
The heads thereof judge for reward,
And the priests thereof teach for hire,
And the prophets thereof divine for money:
Yet will they lean upon Jehovah, and say,
"Is not Jehovah in the midst of us
No evil shall come upon us."
Therefore shall Zion, on your account, be plowed as a field
And Jerusalem shall become heaps,
And the mountain of the house,[1] as the high places of the forest.[2]

We see that two prophets of the same generation, influenced by differing traits and experiences, differed radically in their judgment as to the outcome of political events, but each based his theory upon his conception of the character of Jehovah as an ethical God, demanding right relations between man and man, as well as between God and man. In the words of a later prophet:

"What doth Jehovah require of thee,
But to deal justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God?"

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[1] *The mountain of the house:* The Temple hill.

[2] Note in the last lines of this selection the climax of the arraignment. The people assuring themselves that Jehovah cannot desert them see no cause for serious alarm. The prophet sees them doomed to captivity, and their land a desolation.

The picture contained in the first strophe is so strong as to be almost repulsive. Is it not however almost as appropriate a representation of some existing conditions today?

CHAPTER XI

JEREMIAH AND THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

The long and wicked reign of Manasseh in Judah (685–641 B.C.) served to establish more firmly than ever idolatrous worship and the immoral practices of the people. Of the prophets of Jehovah, some perished in a general persecution, others were silenced for the time. That those who survived were not inactive is evidenced by later events. Manasseh was succeeded by his son Amon whose reign of less than two years, ending in assassination, was not distinguished in morals and religion from that of his father. Perhaps the death of this worthless monarch may have been directly or indirectly the result of feeling stirred up by priests and prophets of Jehovah, for it would seem that the eight-year-old boy, Josiah, the son of Amon, who was placed upon the throne at the death of his father was watched over by both priests and prophets with jealous care. During all this period, faith seems to have been kept with Assyria and the fate of rebellious vassal kingdoms avoided. But about 626 B.C. a new foe appeared upon the horizon of western Asia, and Palestine lay in the path of the invaders.

The Scythians were a nomadic people, rude and barbarous, but apparently invincible in war, who originated in southeastern Europe, and spread eastward throughout central Asia. Little is known of them. Herodotus is responsible for the statement that at about this date a horde of uncivilized and brutal Scythians swept eastward and southward seeking to overthrow the Medes, a people from the northwest who had their eyes fixed upon the riches of the Assyrian kingdom, and the fertile valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates. Herodotus reports that the Scythians became masters of Asia, and sought to extend their conquests to Egypt, but were met by the king of Egypt in Palestine, and in response to tribute and entreaties turned back upon their path. Whatever may have been the exact extent of their conquests, a wave of terror must have spread before them, heralding their approach. In Judah, lying directly in the path to Egypt, with

all her outlying defenses swept away by previous invaders,[1] the outlook was most alarming. Oppressive as was the Assyrian yoke, it was preferable to the barbarous conquests of this new foe.

The Call of Jeremiah

We are not surprised under the circumstances to see a prophet of Jehovah again at the front, warning, counseling and consoling. Jeremiah of Anathoth,[2] in Benjamin,[3] the son of a priest, living in a community of priests, tells a poetic and passionate story of his call to be a prophet to his people.[4]

Now the word of Jehovah came unto me saying, "Before I formed thee I knew thee, and before thou wast born I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations."

Then said I, "Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak, for I am a child."[5]

But Jehovah said unto me, "Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee," saith Jehovah.

Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."[6]

Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, "Jeremiah, what seest thou?"

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[1] See chap. ix, pp. 118–25, on the invasions of Sennacherib.

[2] **Anathoth:* A community of priests from early times from which possibly groups of priests were accustomed to go by turns to minister in the temple in Jerusalem, about three miles distant. The family of Jeremiah was among the land owners of this village. The custom of celibacy was not followed by Hebrew priests, and they lived with their families when not on duty at the temple. Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a priest, and was in all probability himself trained for the priesthood. His sympathetic and passionate nature would quickly rebel against the devotion of his life to the formal and empty ceremonies of the temple worship.

[3] **Benjamin:* See tribal map, opposite p. 8.

[4] Jer. 1:4–19 (revised from Am. Standard Rev. Ver.).

[5] *I am a child:* That is, young and inexperienced for so great a task as that to be imposed upon him.

[6] As in the case of Isaiah, we see here the effect of later experience upon the story of the prophetic call.

And I said, "I see a rod of an almond-tree."[1]

Then said Jehovah unto me, "Thou hast well seen: for I watch over my word to perform it."

And the word of Jehovah came unto me the second time, saying, "What seest thou?"

And I said, "I see a boiling cauldron;[2] and the face thereof is from the north."

Then Jehovah said unto me, "Out of the North evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the North,[3] and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, in that they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at them, lest I dismay thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a fortified city,[4] and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee," saith Jehovah, "to deliver thee."

The Scythian Invasion a Punishment for Idolatry

A "boiling cauldron" was an apt description of the surrounding nations during the eventful fifty years which followed the day on which Jeremiah's conviction of his mission drove him to his work.

[1] *An almond tree:* The significance of this comparison is lost in the English. It depends upon a similarity between the Hebrew word for the almond tree, which bloomed when other trees were bare, and the word for watching, or to be wakeful, the mental picture of the tree suggesting to the prophet the act of watching.

[2] *A boiling cauldron:* That is, just ready to boil up and discharge its contents: a figure of the disaster which was brewing in the North, already manifesting itself as a menace to Judah.

[3] *The kingdoms of the North:* The North was an unknown country to the inhabitants of Palestine. Out of it had already come great nations, and beyond might be many more.

[4] *A fortified city:* The assurance of strength at the very outset of his ministry was most inspiring, but we shall see that it may well have been the expression of Jeremiah's own sense of his power of resistance as it was developed in his experience.

To him as to all true worshipers of Jehovah in his day, the Scythians represented the scourging wrath of Judah's God on account of the shortcomings of his people. Judah's apostasy was to them sufficient cause for the employment of another dread nation as the instrument of Jehovah's chastening. One of the prophets, a little later but under similar circumstances, however, voiced the question of many hearts: "Why does Jehovah use a *wicked* nation to execute his purposes against his disobedient people?"[1] There was to them no satisfactory answer, but the fact that he did use heathen nations for this purpose seemed only too apparent.

In this situation Jeremiah lamented over the sins of his people and made passionate appeals to them to return to Jehovah, and so avert disaster. It was against idolatry,[2] as representing the primal sin of disloyalty to Jehovah, that Jeremiah directed his early efforts.

[3]A voice is heard upon the bare heights, the weeping and the supplications of the children of Israel; because they have perverted their way, they have forgotten Jehovah their God. "Return ye backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings."
"Behold, we are come unto thee; for thou art Jehovah our God. Truly in vain is the help that is looked for from the hills, the tumult on the mountains: truly in Jehovah our God is the salvation of Israel. But the shameful thing[4] hath devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. Let us lie down in our shame, and let our confusion cover us; for we have sinned against Jehovah our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day; and we have not obeyed the voice of Jehovah our God."

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[1] Viz., Habakkuk.

[2] **Idolatry:* The idolatry of this period was not only widespread, but universal in character. The worship of Jehovah was not by any means abandoned, but it was placed on a level with the worship of the heavenly bodies, of images, and of powers of Nature. Many phases of worship in these various cults were far more attractive to the mass of the people than the older forms of Jehovah worship. Doubtless in the temple and at the high places Jehovah himself was frequently worshiped through heathen rites and ceremonies. The ethical qualities of justice and simplicity required by Jehovah in his worship were entirely lost sight of, and his demands were accounted just such as those supposed of other gods.

[3] Jer. 3:21—4:2 (revised from Am. Standard Rev. Ver.).

[4] *The shameful thing:* that is idolatry.

"If thou wilt return, O Israel," saith Jehovah, "if thou wilt return unto me, and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight; then shalt thou not be removed;[1] and thou shalt swear, As Jehovah liveth, in truth, in justice, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory."

Deliverance Conditional upon Moral Reform

In his zeal to abolish idolatry Jeremiah did not abandon the old theme of his predecessors among the prophets, the necessity for the kind of righteousness which included justice, mercy, and truth. The nation was directed to Jehovah for refuge from the impending calamity, but no deliverance was promised save on the condition of complete moral reform.[2]

[3]For thus saith Jehovah to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem,

"Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.
Consecrate yourselves to Jehovah, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem;
Lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn so that none can quench it
Because of the evil of your doings.

[1] *Thou shalt not be removed:* As events progressed, this promise drops out of Jeremiah's messages. In these early days of his ministry, he has strong hopes of turning the people back from idolatry.

[2] *Zephaniah, a prophet of whose personal life we can conjecture nothing, has left us evidence of his work in this period. He was a great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah and was probably the first to attempt to bring the people back to Jehovah after the long period of superstition and idolatry under Manasseh and Amon. His addresses are plainly influenced by the threatened Scythian invasion. They are full of gloom, picturing the day of Jehovah as rapidly approaching, a day of wrath and trouble. Not all of the chapters which bear his name in our Old Testament are his, but the following quite certainly come from this situation: 1:2–6, 7–18; 2:1–8, 12–15; 3:1–7. The following is an extract from one of his addresses:

Near is the day of Jehovah! near and rapidly approaching!
Near is the bitter day of Jehovah, and strong men will then cry out;
That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and battle cry,
Against the fortified cities and against the high battlements.
And I will bring distress upon men and they shall walk as the blind
And their blood shall be poured out as dust and their flesh as dung.

[3] Jer. 4:3–8, 11–21; 5:1–3, 15–17; 6:16–26 (revised from Am. Standard Rev. Ver.).

"Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say,
Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry aloud and say,
Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fortified cities.
Set up a standard toward Zion: flee for safety, stay not;
For I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.
A lion is gone up from his thicket, and a destroyer of nations;
He is on his way, he is gone forth from his place,
To make thy land desolate, that thy cities be laid waste,
without inhabitant."
For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and wail;
For the fierce anger of Jehovah is not turned back from us.[1]

At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem,
"A hot wind from the bare heights in the wilderness toward
the daughter of my people,
Not to winnow, nor to cleanse;
A full wind from these shall come for me:
Now will I also utter judgments against them."
Behold, he shall come up as clouds,
And his chariots shall be as the whirlwind:
His horses are swifter than eagles.
Woe unto us! for we are ruined.[2]

O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou
mayest be saved.
How long shall thine evil thoughts lodge within thee?
For a voice declareth from Dan,
And publisheth evil from the hills of Ephraim.
Make ye mention to the nations;
Behold, publish against Jerusalem,
That watchers come from a far country,
And give out their voice against the cities of Judah.
As keepers of a field are they against her round about,
Because she hath been rebellious against me,"
Saith Jehovah.
"Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto
thee;
This is thy wickedness; for it is bitter,
For it reacheth unto thy heart."[3]

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[1] A call to the inhabitants of the land to prepare for a great invasion by taking refuge in the fortified cities; an invasion from the North, sent by Jehovah in fierce anger.

[2] "It will be like a great wind-storm from the hot desert, destroying everything in its path."

[3] "The wickedness of Jerusalem is responsible for the scourge."

My anguish, my anguish! I am pained at my very heart;
My heart is disquieted in me; I cannot hold my peace;
Because thou hast heard, O my soul,
The sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.
Destruction upon destruction is cried;
For the whole land is laid waste:
Suddenly are my tents destroyed,
And my curtains in a moment.
How long shall I see the standard,
And hear the sound of the trumpet?[1]

JERUSALEM WHOLLY DEPRAVED[2]

Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth; and I will pardon her. And though they say, "As Jehovah liveth," surely they swear falsely. O Jehovah, do not thine eyes look upon truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they were not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

"Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel," saith Jehovah: "it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. Their quiver is an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thy harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat; they shall eat up thy flocks and thy herds; they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees; they shall beat down thy fortified cities wherein thou trustest, with the sword."[3]

PERSISTENT SIN AND IMMINENT PUNISHMENT[4]

Thus saith Jehovah,
"Stand ye in the ways and see,
And ask for the old paths,
Where is the good way; and walk therein,
And ye shall find rest for your souls:"

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[1] The prophet's cry of anguish over the desolation which seems to him inevitable.

[2] Jer. 5:1–3, 15–17 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] "The stranger nation shall come and the fortified cities in which the people have taken refuge will be beaten down."

[4] Jer. 6:16–26 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

But they said, "We will not walk therein."
And I set watchmen over you, saying,
"Hearken to the sound of the trumpet,"
But they said, "We will not hearken."

Therefore hear, ye nations,
And know, O congregation, what is among them.
Hear, O earth:
"Behold, I will bring evil upon this people,
Even the fruit of their thoughts,
Because they have not hearkened unto my words,
And as for my law,
They have rejected it.

To what purpose cometh there to me frankincense from Sheba,
And the sweet cane from a far country?
Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable,
Nor your sacrifices pleasing unto me."[1]

Therefore thus saith Jehovah,
"Behold, I will lay stumbling blocks before this people;
And the fathers and the sons together shall stumble against them;
The neighbor and his friend shall perish.

Thus saith Jehovah,
"Behold, a people cometh from the north country;
And a great nation shall be stirred up from the uttermost parts of the earth.
They lay hold on bow and spear;
They are cruel, and have no mercy;
Their voice roareth like the sea, and they ride upon horses,
Every one set in array, as a man to the battle,
Against thee, O daughter of Zion."

We have heard the report thereof;
Our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us.
Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way;
For the sword of the enemy, and terror, are on every side.

[1] Lines 1–21: "Jehovah has persuaded in vain. Ye would not listen. Obedience, not sacrifice, is the desire of Jehovah."

O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth,
And wallow thyself in ashes:
Make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation;
For the destroyer shall suddenly come upon us.[1]

But the Scythian destroyer turned back without greater devastation than that made by his predecessors, and Judah was saved for the time. Jeremiah's predictions lost their significance to the people, and the prophet was treated with contempt, but not silenced.

The New Law Book and the Reformation

The prophets were practical men as well as idealists. Jeremiah and his associates saw that ignorance of Jehovah and his fundamental laws was one of the chief obstacles to reform. Perhaps among these associates we may count the young king who had been growing up under the shadow of the Temple and the tutelage of priests and prophets. The only formal law code which we know as existing at this time was from an early period, custom having dictated such additions as were necessary.[2] At all events if any more systematic code had been formulated it had not become operative in the confused state of Israel's political and religious life.

Just here a story which we find in the records of the kings of Judah helps out our history. In the eighteenth year of king Josiah (621 B.C.), at his direction, a general repairing of the Temple was undertaken. During this process a book was found, which contained an elaborate code of laws including all the ancient laws of Israel as believed to have been given by Jehovah through his servant Moses, now newly formulated, and such later additions as would meet the approval of priests and prophets of Jehovah. Written in a new and striking literary form, and saturated with

[1] Lines 22-41: "The destroyer is cruel and invincible. Put on mourning for he will quickly and suddenly come."

[2] *The early code:* Exod., chaps. 20 to 23, contains the only formal code of laws promulgated previous to this time. It contains the Ten Commandments and a series of laws suitable to an agricultural people, laws such as would enable a community of people to live comfortably and peaceably together in mutual respect for each other's personal and property rights.

the ethical ideals of the prophets of Josiah's day, the book was well calculated to make a deep impression. It was especially directed against the worship of idols, and the distribution of worship at the many local shrines throughout the land. It reiterated in many forms the principle of one God for Israel, and that God Jehovah; one place of worship, and that place the Temple in Jerusalem. It also placed limitations upon the priesthood which would insure the purity of worship.[1]

The origin of the book is unknown; it was perhaps a part of a plan of priests and prophets to move the king to action, or possibly a book which had been prepared in the time of Hezekiah, and lost sight of during the reaction from Jehovah-worship under the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. At all events the book bore the stamp of the ancient lawgiver, Moses, and found its basis in his teaching. The king was greatly moved by his reading of the book, and commanded that it be read in public. He then inaugurated a reform which was both drastic and far reaching, abolishing all local sanctuaries in Judah, destroying their equipment, and making all worship save that of Jehovah, at the Temple in Jerusalem, illegal. We can imagine Jeremiah deeply engaged in the propagation of the principles of this book, in which a new motive for obedience to Jehovah was continually set forth. "Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy

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[1] *The book:* This book, which was found, is supposed to be the central portion of the Book of Deuteronomy, chaps. 12–26. A comparison of this book with the code in Exodus shows that it contains practically all of the Exodus code, but in a form better adapted to the life of the nation in Josiah's times, and with the addition of many laws which were not needed in the simpler life of the early days. The idea of Jehovah which it presents could hardly have been conceived earlier than the days of Hosea. The fact that the authorship of this book was attributed to Moses does not, as in modern times, necessarily indicate the real authorship. Literary authorship was not as universally claimed in ancient times as now, and it was the custom to attach the name of a man who had achieved greatness in some direction to many productions of a like character but from different authors. This was sometimes designed and sometimes accidental, the real author being unknown. Thus, the name of Moses, the first lawgiver, stood for Law, and all laws were published under his name. Solomon had a reputation for wisdom, and whole editions of proverbs and wisdom-sayings were attributed to him. David was a poet and therefore many poems other than those which he wrote became attached to his name.

might."[1] Fear and expedience had too frequently been the motive urged by prophets in the past. A new note became dominant when the prophets of Jeremiah's day insisted upon love and gratitude as the basis of obedience. In the face of disasters past and to come, it took courage to make such a principle the basis of appeal to the people now flourishing under idolatry. We are not surprised to find that Jeremiah frequently does not count upon it sufficiently to modify the language or the spirit of his message.

The word[2] that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say thou unto them: Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel:
"Cursed be the man that heareth not the words of this covenant,[3] which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; that I may establish the oath which I sware unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day." Then answered I, and said, "Amen, O Jehovah."[4]

The Death of Josiah and the Reaction

The finding of the new law book and the enforced reformation under Josiah took place in 621 B.C. and the years immediately following.[5] How many of the people thus forced into Jehovah-worship really changed their views we do not know, but an event which occurred some twelve years later again swung the pendulum

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[1] Deut. 6:5.

[2] Jer. 11:1–5 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] *Covenant:* Reference to the Book of Deuteronomy will show that in every case the promise of Jehovah to protect and bless his people was conditioned upon their obedience and loyalty. That is, Jehovah entered into a covenant or agreement with his people to be faithful to them if they would be faithful to him. See Deut. 6:1–3.

[4] *Amen:* so be it.

[5] See the full story of Josiah's reformation as described in II Kings, chaps. 22, 23, and compare also Deut., chap. 12.

over to the side of idolatry.[1] Egypt under a strong king, Pharaoh Necho,[2] took advantage of the weakening of the Assyrian empire to strike a blow for supremacy in the Orient. Josiah, whether as champion of his overlord Assyria, or in defense of his own territory, went out against the king of Egypt. The two kings met at Megiddo[3] in Palestine. A battle ensued in which the king of Judah was killed. The mass of the people could interpret this disaster in but one way, the failure of Jehovah to protect his king. Under the idolatrous reign of Manasseh and Amon the country had been free from great disasters. "The idols are better than Jehovah," must have been the verdict of those who judged by external events. The nation relapsed into idolatry more universal than before the reformation. In vain did the prophets explain that the disaster was the result of past sins. Their demands for reform fell upon the unheeding ears of the new king Jehoahaz and his supporters.

Before three months had passed Pharoah Necho, having cause to suspect the fidelity of Jehoahaz, deposed him, and carried him to Egypt where he remained an exile to the end of his life. The second son of Josiah was placed upon the throne as a servant of the king of Egypt, and for eleven years succeeded in remaining there. Those were trying years for Jeremiah. Jehovah was popularly deemed one of many gods promiscuously worshiped. To do homage to all gods meant to secure the protection of all. Read Jeremiah's speech delivered in the great gate of the Temple to the people coming to worship Jehovah.

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[1] Would a reformation which represented no initiative on the part of any large part of the people be likely to have in it the quality of permanence? We must recall also that although the shrines about which many traditions clustered were all destroyed, worship at a comparatively distant temple could not appeal to the masses and would not command attention when the legal ban placed upon worship elsewhere was removed by the death of the king.

[2] *Pharaoh Necho:* the second king of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty of Egyptian kings (610–594 B.C.). He is known only by the references to his reign in the Old Testament and in Herodotus. In accordance with the plans of his father Psammeticus he devoted much of his activity to the development of Egypt's commercial interests.

[3] *Megiddo:* See map, opposite p. 100. A very old town, formerly Canaanitish, situated in the pass over the ridge of Mount Carmel, through which ran the great road from Egypt to the North. It was probably during the passage of this defile that Josiah's soldiers attacked Pharaoh's army.

[1]Hear the word of Jehovah, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.[2] Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore.

Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods that ye have not known, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, saith Jehovah.

But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh,[3] where I caused my name to dwell at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith Jehovah, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: therefore will I do unto the house which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee. Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children

[1] Jer. 7:2*b*–23 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] *Amend your ways:* In this address Jeremiah strikes a hard blow at the elaborate worship of Jehovah in the Temple as well as the worship of other gods. Conduct, not worship, is the essential thing. It is the old prophetic doctrine of obedience rather than sacrifice as acceptable to Jehovah.

[3] **Shiloh:* This will be remembered as the old sanctuary from which Samuel came, and which was destroyed by the Philistines. See preceding note, p. 10. The prophet says, "As Jehovah did to Shiloh so will he do to this Temple."

gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.[1] Do they provoke me to anger?" saith Jehovah; "do they not provoke themselves, to the confusion of their own faces?" Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: "Behold, mine anger and my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched."

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: "Add your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you."[2]

The Fall of Assyria

Reference to the outline of the events of the period, and to the maps opposite p. 100, will show us that in 606 B.C. an event took place which shocked the whole Asiatic world. The kingdom of Assyria had never been able to hold firmly its province of Babylonia, an extensive and ancient kingdom to the southeast. Neither was Assyria a well-knit kingdom in any of its parts. The vassal states were held wholly by military force, rather than by sympathy and common interests. Whenever an enemy arose in any direction, instead of being able to command her vassal states for defense, Assyria was faced by a series of rebellions in her own conquered provinces. When therefore the Medes[3] sought to join the Babylonians in an alliance against Assyria, they found ready response.

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[1] Lines 34–40: The material for sacrifices to be offered to the heavenly bodies.

[2] *That it may be well with you:* There is still hope in the heart of the prophet that he may be successful in bringing about reform.

[3] **The Medes:* A people from the region of the Persian Gulf. From the Assyrian inscriptions we learn that they obeyed no central authority, but were divided into a number of small independent states. "They were the advance guard of a migration of Indo-Germanic peoples which was to overwhelm the ancient oriental world and

Judah soon saw Assyria, for centuries past her dreaded foe, helpless in the power of her combined enemies, and Nineveh her capital razed to the ground.[1]

Taking advantage of his opportunity Pharaoh Necho advanced to the northeast, but was met by Nebuchadnezzar, the son of the king of Babylon, at Carchemish,[2] and driven back to his own land. Thus Babylon reigned supreme in western Asia. Judah suffered materially from the ravages of the soldiery and her rejoicing in the downfall of her enemy was tempered by the uncertainty of her own fate in the shuffling of powers which was going on about her. In this crisis Jeremiah saw no hope for the nation.

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts,[3]
"Consider ye, and call for the mourning women,[4] that they may come;
And send for the skilful women, that they may come:
And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us,
That our eyes may run down with tears,
And our eyelids gush out with waters.
For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion,
How are we ruined! we are greatly confounded,
Because we have forsaken the land,
Because they have cast down our dwellings."

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usher in a new era." In the division of the Assyrian empire the Medes received the eastern and northern mountainous regions, and the Babylonians the valley west of the Tigris, and the Mediterranean coast lands. See map, opposite p. 100. The inhabitants of Babylonia were of the Chaldi race, therefore chiefly called Chaldeans in the Hebrew narrative.

[1] For the feelings with which Judah contemplated the fate of Nineveh, see the Book of Nahum.

[2] **Carchemish:* See map, opposite p. 100; an old Assyrian city on the west bank of the Euphrates River. This was one of the most important battles of ancient history, for with it practically ended the struggle of Egypt to regain the supremacy over Western Asia which had been hers in the days of her prime.

[3] Jer. 9:17–22; 10:17–22 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[4] *Mourning women:* women who were employed as professional mourners for the dead. Some of them were most skilful in their ability to touch the hearts of the friends of the deceased by appropriate allusions to the dead, and by sympathetic lamentations. The prophet sees, as if it were already present, the destruction of the city and the death of its inhabitants.

SITE OF ANCIENT NINEVEH

Yet hear the word of Jehovah, O ye women,
And let your ear receive the word of his mouth;
And teach your daughters wailing,
And every one her neighbor lamentation.
For death is come up into our windows,
It is entered into our palaces;
To cut off the children from without,
And the young men from the streets.

Speak, Thus saith Jehovah,
"The dead bodies of men shall fall as refuse upon the open field,
And as the handful after the harvestman;
And none shall gather them."[1]
Gather up thy wares out of the land,
O thou that abidest in the siege.
For thus saith Jehovah,
"Behold I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this time,
And will distress them, that they may feel it.

"Woe is me because of my hurt!
My wound is grievous:
Truly this is my grief,
And I must bear it.
My tent[2] is destroyed, and all my cords are broken:
My children are gone forth from me,
And they are not:
There is none to spread my tent any more,
And to set up my curtains.

For the shepherds[3] are become brutish,
And have not inquired of Jehovah:
Therefore they have not prospered,
And all their flocks are scattered.

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[1] *Jer. 9:17–22:* A part of a much longer address from the prophet in which he laments the fate of the people, well deserved as he claims it to be. Read from the Bible vss. 1–11 of this chapter.

[2] *My tent:* The old tabernacle or tent of worship is here used as a figure to represent Jehovah-worship in Jerusalem.

[3] *The shepherds:* The leaders of the people.

The voice of tidings, behold, it cometh,
And a great commotion out of the north country,
To make the cities of Judah a desolation,
A dwelling-place of jackals."[1]

Jeremiah's Visit to Anathoth

For some reason which we do not know, perhaps weary of the hopelessness of his work in Jerusalem, Jeremiah went to Anathoth, his old home. But his reputation had preceded him. All unsuspecting of the enmity of his old neighbors, he found himself in the midst of a conspiracy against his life, which hurt his sensitive spirit more than it daunted his courage.

[2]And Jehovah gave me knowledge of it, and I knew it: then thou showedst me their doings. But I was like a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree[3] with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered." But, O Jehovah of hosts, who judgest righteously, who triest the heart and the mind, I shall see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause. Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, "Thou shalt not prophesy in the name of Jehovah, that thou die not by our hand," therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, "Behold, I will punish them: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; and there shall be no remnant unto them: For I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation." [4]

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[1] *Jer. 10:17–22:* The prophet represents Jehovah as wounded and grieved at the forgetfulness of the people.

[2] Jer. 11:18—12:6 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] *The tree:* The people refer to Jeremiah as a tree, a very common oriental figure for a man.

[4] Lines 5–15: Do not indicate a curse on Jeremiah's part, against his enemies, but a direct statement which reflects his opinion of Jehovah's justice. Jeremiah represents the wrong party according to the ideas of the men of Anathoth, and therefore they attempt to silence him permanently. Is there not something distinctly modern in this attempt to keep honest men from speaking their views when they are contrary to popular sentiment? In a small town like Anathoth there would be little room for difference of opinion.

Righteous art thou, O Jehovah, when I contend with thee;
yet would I reason the cause with thee: wherefore doth the
20 way of the wicked prosper?[1] Wherefore are all they at ease
that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea,
they have taken root; they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit:
thou art near in their mouth, and far from their heart. But
thou, O Jehovah, knowest me; thou seest me, and triest my
25 heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter,
and prepare them for the day of slaughter. How long shall
the land mourn, and the herbs of the whole country wither?
For the wickedness of them that dwell therein, the beasts are
consumed, and the birds, because they said, "He shall not see
30 our latter end."

The Answer of Jehovah:

[2] "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied
thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And though
in a land of peace thou art secure, yet how wilt thou do in the
pride of the Jordan? For even thy brethren, and the house
35 of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee;
even they have cried aloud after thee: believe them not,
though they speak fair words unto thee."

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[1] *Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?* This was the question which confronted every thoughtful Hebrew in the days of the national decline. The old doctrine that prosperity was always an indication of righteousness, and suffering an indication of sin was becoming unsettled, and as yet nothing better had taken its place.

Another phase of this question is presented by another prophet of this period. The facts of his life are unknown to us. Habakkuk's prophecy might be reduced in plain prose to the following:

Prophet: Why, O Lord, when we cry, being in such wretchedness, dost thou not answer? *Jehovah:* Behold! I will do a thing—ye will not believe it; I will bring the Chaldeans, strong and mighty, who abandon themselves to the worship of selfish force. *Prophet:* I am sure we shall not die; but how can *you*, such a God, allow the Chaldeans to triumph over us? *Jehovah:* (No answer.) *Prophet:* I will wait in meditation, on the watchtower, for further answer. *Jehovah:* An important matter; Babylon is proud and ambitious, *but the righteous shall live, if they remain faithful.* The nations gathered in by the Chaldean king will curse him, because of his covetousness, rapacity, his selfishness, his passion for building, and consequent oppression, his delight in conquest, his idolatry. *Prophet:* Let all the world be silent in the presence of Jehovah.

[2] *If thou hast run:* The answer of Jehovah is not a direct answer to the question but rather a word of reproof and stimulus. "How are you to be a good servant of Jehovah if you are already discouraged? Strengthen yourself for what is to come. Your dependence is not upon man but upon Jehovah."

The Visit to the Potter and Its Consequences[1]

Many of the stories of Jeremiah come from the hand of his faithful secretary Baruch,[2] who when Jeremiah could no longer command listeners wrote many of his messages, and preserved memorabilia of the life of the prophet, which are of the greatest value to us. To him we possibly owe the following story of Jeremiah's visit to the potter, the public interpretation of which brought upon him a mob from whose fury he turned in pathetic appeal to Jehovah.

The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words." Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels.[3] And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?" saith Jehovah. "Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the

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[1] Jer. 18:1–20. Throughout this story the prophet is seeking to make clear that Jehovah is able to make over the nation if it will only turn to him in obedience. Jehovah does not wish to destroy it. He will do so only if it proves itself worthless. To a man whose whole mind was bent upon his message the things which he saw about him were constantly suggesting comparisons and illustrations which he freely used.

[2] *Baruch:* See Jer. 32:12, 36:4 for references to Baruch. Tradition says that the faithful scribe was with Jeremiah until his death. Some say that he went to Babylonia after the death of his master, and died there twelve years after the fall of Jerusalem. The fact that the prophet employed such a scribe shows us that his work of prophesying was really a profession, just as the work of a preacher is a profession today. Jeremiah did not however receive remuneration. It is possible that a considerable number of the stories of Jeremiah which we have were written after the death of the prophet. The story of the fate of one of the rolls prepared by Baruch is found in the 36th chapter of Jeremiah.

[3] *Wheels:* The clay was shaped by means of two round stones. The upper one supported the clay, the lower one was turned by the feet.

evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.[1] Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Jehovah:

"Behold, I frame evil against you,
And devise a device against you:
Return ye now every one from his evil way,
And amend your ways and your doings."
But they say, "It is in vain;
For we will walk after our own devices,
And we will do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart."
Therefore thus saith Jehovah: "Ask ye now among the nations, who hath heard such things?
The virgin of Israel[2] hath done a very horrible thing.
Shall the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field?
Or shall the cold waters that flow down from afar be dried up?
For my people have forgotten me,
They have burned incense to false gods;
And they have been made to stumble in their ways, in the ancient paths,
To walk in by-paths, in a way not cast up;
To make their land an astonishment, and a perpetual hissing.
Every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and shake his head.
I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy;
I will show them the back, and not the face,
In the day of their calamity."[3]

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[1] Lines 11–19: give in terse form the theory of the prophets of Jeremiah's day that the judgments of Jehovah were always conditional. Repentance will avert judgment. Jehovah threatens only that he may reform, not that he may take vengeance for its own sake. Conversely, promised blessings are conditioned upon right conduct. Is this the vital principle in the teaching of the prophets and of all great religious teachers—true religion must find its expression in conduct?

[2] *The virgin of Israel:* meaning Israel the nation.

[3] Lines 30–41: Punishment is as inevitable as the coming down of the waters from the snow-clad mountains in the melting season.

Then said they, "Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words."[1]

(Jeremiah protests): "Give heed to me, O Jehovah, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember how I stood before thee to speak good for them, to turn away thy wrath from them."[2]

The persecutors had their way. One of the infuriated Temple officers had Jeremiah placed in the stocks[3] for twenty-four hours. Released once more, Jeremiah's wretched body longed to turn from his thankless task, but his great spirit could not keep silent. His impulse to speak he describes as a "burning fire" within him.

[4] O Jehovah, thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded;
Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed:
I am become a laughing-stock all the day;
Every one mocketh me.
For as often as I speak, I cry out;
I cry, Violence and destruction!
Because the word of Jehovah is made a reproach unto me,
and a derision, all the day.[5]
And if I say, I will not make mention of him,
Nor speak any more in his name,
Then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up
in my bones,
And I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain.[6]

[1] Lines 42–46: The record of the effect of this speech upon the hearers of the prophet: "What matter if we kill Jeremiah? There will be plenty more prophets," is the thought.

[2] Lines 47–51: The prophet turns to Jehovah as to the only one who can appreciate the fact that he is giving his life to the work of saving the people.

[3] *The stocks:* Probably the ancient stocks were like those of more modern times: a solid piece of wood set up on edge, in which were five holes, through which the neck, arms, and legs were placed, thus bending the body into a cramped position and keeping it immovable. It was one of the most painful of the lesser forms of punishment, especially when so long continued as in the case of Jeremiah.

[4] Jer. 20:7–9, 14–18 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[5] Lines 1–7: "I have obeyed thy words, O Jehovah, but now see the result."

[6] Lines 8–11: "Nevertheless I cannot keep still, I must speak."

Cursed be the day wherein I was born:
Let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.
Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying,
"A man-child is born unto thee;" making him very glad.
And let that man be as the cities which Jehovah overthrew and repented not:
And let him hear a cry in the morning, and shouting at noontime;
Because he slew me not at birth.
Wherefore came I into this world to see labor and sorrow,
That my days should be consumed with shame?[1]

The First Deportation

Through all this period the prophet's position was made more acute by the fact that Jehoiakim the king was utterly out of sympathy with him. He disregarded and destroyed all messages from Jeremiah. Although Jerusalem was in imminent danger of destruction he busied himself with the construction of a fine palace, the accumulation of great possessions, and the imitation of the monarchs of surrounding countries. He lived in extravagant and selfish neglect of his people. In the year 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, then king of Babylon,[2] demanded the submission of Judah. Jehoiakim submitted and paid tribute for that and the two succeeding years. Then he foolishly revolted. He did not himself suffer the penalty of his folly for, before Nebuchadnezzar could conveniently begin the siege of Jerusalem, he died. His eighteen-year-old son Jehoiachin succeeded him, and was forced to stand a siege which after only three months ended in surrender (597 B.C.).[3]

Bitter indeed were the feelings of Jeremiah as he saw the best

[1] Lines 12–20: "O, that I had never been born."

[2] *Nebuchadnezzar:* king of Babylon, or Chaldea, 604–561 B.C., was the son of Nabopolassar under whom the Chaldean kingdom was established at the overthrow of Assyria. As his father's general Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho, king of Egypt, at the battle of Carchemish (see p. 146), in 605 B.C. While on this campaign he was notified of his father's death. He secured the throne without opposition. Under Nebuchadnezzar the city of Babylon, which was the capital of his empire, became the most magnificent political, religious, and commercial center of the Asiatic world. For the extent of his conquests see map, opposite p. 100.

[3] For the full story of the siege and its results see II Kings 24:10–18.

blood of Jerusalem, the king, the princes, the men of wealth with their families transported to Babylon. They carried with them for the enrichment of the coffers of Assyria all the booty which Nebuchadnezzar chose to demand, and the amount was not small. But the city itself was not destroyed. Zedekiah,[1] the eldest son of Josiah, who had hitherto been passed over in the selection of kings, was made subject king, swearing a solemn oath of allegience to Nebuchadnezzar. From this time onward Jeremiah devoted himself to keeping Zedekiah faithful to his pledge, plainly seeing that in quiet submission to Babylon[2] lay the only possibility of saving the city from complete destruction.

Letters to the Exiles in Babylon

In the people who now remained in Jerusalem Jeremiah saw no material for the upbuilding of the Jerusalem of his dreams, and he directed his encouragement not to the people in the city but to the exiles in Babylon. The attitude of the citizens of Jerusalem toward those exiles was most exasperating. Because they had been left in the land by Jehovah they assumed that they were more virtuous than their brethren in exile and spoke of them with scorn.

Jeremiah could see that if the religion of Jehovah was to be preserved it must be through the more intelligent class of

[1] *Zedekiah:* the eldest son of Josiah. Why he had not previously been chosen king instead of his younger brother we do not know. Perhaps however it was because of his character, a study of which is well worth while. It is difficult to decide whether he had a superstitious fear of Jeremiah, as the representative of Jehovah, or a real desire to be loyal to Jehovah. If the latter was the case he had not the strength of mind to stand by his own convictions. He seems to have been ruled by the princes of the realm, rather than to have been their ruler. Are there evidences that he was both cowardly and kindly, a mixture of good and bad, with a weak will with which to control these warring elements?

[2] *Submission to Babylon:* Any statesman at this time could have seen that in submission to Babylon lay the only hope of saving the city of Jerusalem from destruction. But in Jerusalem superstition reigned. Statesmanship was not cultivated. Religion was the criterion of everything. As yet religion and morals had not become identified as dependent upon each other, and moral decay of the worst type could go on where religion as it was then conceived was most flourishing. Since also submission to Babylon meant in ordinary thought acceptance of the Babylonian gods, we can well see why the people regarded Jeremiah as inconsistent and "crazy."

Jews who had been deported. To the prophet as well as to his exiled brethren was coming the grave question whether Jehovah could be worshiped in any land but Palestine. It was the question of a lost religion and a lost God which confronted the prophets at this point. It is easy to predict that to the prophets would first come the conviction that Jehovah would not fail his people in *any* land.

To the exiles Jeremiah addressed letters, an extract from one of which gives the purport of his message. He counsels patience under a prolonged residence in Babylon in which the exiles should engage in building and planting, "seeking the peace of the city in which ye dwell." He warns against prophets who may predict speedy return. More than this he avers that Jehovah will hear the prayers which the people offer in Babylon and will respond to those who seek him with the heart.[1]

[2]Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders of the captivity, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon, by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon).

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem unto Babylon: "Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters: and multiply ye there, and be not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto Jehovah for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: "Let not

[1] We see in this crisis how the preservation of the religion of Jehovah seemed to depend upon the faithfulness of a single prophet. We must however conclude that there were other true and sincere followers of this religion, but they were not strong enough to impress themselves upon the world as Jeremiah has done.

[2] Jer. 29:1–13 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

20 your prophets that are in the midst of you, and your diviners, deceive you; neither hearken ye to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them," saith Jehovah. For thus saith Jehovah, "After seventy years are accomplished for
25 Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you," saith Jehovah, "thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end. And ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me,
30 and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

It is difficult for us to appreciate the skepticism which met the statement of a truth which in our later conception of God is so obvious, but ideas have a history as well as events.[1]

Jeremiah and the Court Prophets

In Jerusalem, Jeremiah was surrounded by prophets who sought to console Zedekiah by predictions of a speedy end to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. So sudden and startling had been the recent changes in the Assyrian and Babylonian world that we cannot blame the optimistic prophets for their hopeful attitude, yet to one who saw deeper than the external political events the obstacles to the restoration of Judah as an independent state were within herself. She had no longer the moral and social stability necessary to the making of a state.[2]

Like his predecessor Isaiah, Jeremiah saw nothing inappropriate in making of himself a walking reminder of his belief that Nebuchadnezzar was divinely appointed to reign over the Palestinian states so long as Jehovah willed it, a belief which brought him directly into opposition to the court prophets who were promising a speedy return. The following story is possibly but one of many incidents of this character.

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[1] This is an indication of the step by which the idea of Jehovah passed from that of a local god, attached to the land, to that of God of the whole world. But the step was not yet complete.

[2] What are the qualities which are necessary in order that a state may be independent and self-governing?

THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

The domed mosque in the foreground stands on the traditional site of the Temple

[1]Thus saith Jehovah to me: "Make thee bonds and bars,[2] and put them upon thy neck; and send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the children of Ammon, and to the king of Tyre, and to the king of Sidon,[3] by the hand of the messengers[4] that come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah: and give them a charge unto their masters, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say unto your masters: I have made the earth, the men and the beasts that are upon the face of the earth, by my great power and by my out-stretched arm; and I give it unto whom it seemeth right unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field also have I given him to serve him. And all the nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his own land come: and then many nations and great kings shall make him their bondman.

And it shall come to pass, that the nation and the kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith Jehovah, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

But as for you, hearken ye not to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreams, nor to your sooth-sayers, nor to your sorcerers,[5] that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie[6] unto you, to remove you far from your land, and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. But the nation that shall bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon,

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[1] Jer. 27:2–22; 28:1–17 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] *Bonds and bars:* an oriental yoke such as would be used for an ox, the symbol of servitude, and of the Babylonian yoke which Judah was seeking to break.

[3] Lines 1–4: Note the enumeration of the nations which shared Judah's servitude. Consult the map, opposite p. 8.

[4] Envoys from the neighboring kings were busy in Jerusalem seeking to persuade Zedekiah to join in a general revolt against Babylon.

[5] Lines 25–29: The king was evidently accustomed to use all the oriental methods of divining the will of the gods.

[6] *Prophesy a lie:* This whole episode is one of the most enlightening upon the subject of the so-called false prophets. See pp. 40–43, concerning the prophet Micaiah.

and serve him, that nation will I let remain in their own land, saith Jehovah; and they shall till it, and dwell therein."

And I spake to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as Jehovah hath spoken concerning the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? And hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon; for they prophesy a lie unto you. For I have not sent them, saith Jehovah, but they prophesy falsely in my name; that I may drive you out, and that ye may perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you."

Also I spake to the priests and to all this people, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah: Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of Jehovah's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon; for they prophesy a lie unto you. Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city become a desolation? But if they be prophets, and if the word of Jehovah be with them, let them now make intercession to Jehovah of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of Jehovah, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that are left in the city, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jehoiachin the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem; yea, thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of Jehovah, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem: They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be, until the day that I visit them,[1] saith Jehovah; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place."

And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet,

[1] *The day that I visit them:* that is the day of their overthrow when Jehovah will visit them in judgment.

who was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of Jehovah, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, "Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of Jehovah's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried to Babylon: and I will bring again to this place Jehoiachin the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went to Babylon, saith Jehovah; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon."

[1] Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of Jehovah, even the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen: Jehovah do so; Jehovah perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of Jehovah's house, and all them of the captivity, from Babylon unto this place. Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people: The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet that prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that Jehovah hath truly sent him."[2] Then Hananiah the prophet took the bar from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon within two full years from off the neck of all the nations." And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

Then the word of Jehovah came unto Jeremiah, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the bar from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Go, and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: Thou hast broken the bars of wood; but thou hast made in their stead bars of iron. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may

[1] Lines 82–85: Jeremiah's yoke has become unendurable to the officials. This meeting was probably by appointment.

[2] Lines 85–95: Jeremiah says, "would that your prophecy might be true, but I know better. All our past history shows that the prophets have been most true when they have prophesied disaster."

serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also."

Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, "Hear now, Hananiah: Jehovah hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will send thee away from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast spoken rebellion against Jehovah."[1] So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

Jeremiah and the Rechabites[2]

The following story presents an incident illustrating another of the ingenious object-lessons which Jeremiah employed in order to emphasize the fact that for disobedience and apostasy the nation was suffering under the hand of Jehovah.

The word which came unto Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, "Go unto the house of the Rechabites,[3] and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of Jehovah, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink."

Then I took the whole house of the Rechabites; and I brought them into the house of Jehovah, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the threshold.[4] And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, "Drink ye wine."

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[1] Lines 111–16: Jeremiah seems to mistrust the sincerity of Hananiah as well as his judgment, hence this stinging rebuke. This somewhat spectacular method of teaching was natural to the oriental mind.

[2] Jer. 35:1–19 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] **The Rechabites:* A tribe of people descended from the Kenites who were bound together by a vow neither to drink wine, nor to dwell in houses or cities. The inconvenience of such a vow in Palestine, the land of the grape and the wine, was great. Yet out of loyalty to their common ancestor these people had kept to the simplicity of their old tribal life until driven into the city for refuge. The incident presented a very striking lesson in a country where the vow was ordinarily associated with a promise to the god.

[4] Note that the incident took place in the closest proximity to the princes and would thus attract the curiosity and attention of just the people whom Jeremiah wished to reach.

But they said, "We will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for ever: neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land wherein ye sojourn. And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians; so we dwell at Jerusalem."

Then[1] came the word of Jehovah unto Jeremiah, saying Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: "Go, and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith Jehovah. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons, not to drink wine, are performed; and unto this day they drink none, for they obey their father's commandment. But I have spoken unto you, rising up early and speaking; and ye have not hearkened unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

Forasmuch as the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father which he commanded them, but this people hath not hearkened unto me; therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered."

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[1] Lines 28–51: The prophet's strange plan has secured an audience, and he turns to it with an application of his lesson.

And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept
55 all his precepts, and done according unto all that he commanded you; therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."[1]

Zedekiah Breaks with Babylonia

Not all the experience of his predecessors, much less the exhortations of Jeremiah, could hold the king true to his agreement with Babylon. The alluring claims of Egypt were to him as to former Palestinian kings the cause of his undoing. He was detected in treasonable negotiations with Pharaoh Hophra,[2] and brought upon the already well-nigh ruined city a siege by Nebuchadnezzar.

Zedekiah, faithless as he was, turned to Jeremiah to learn Jehovah's will. Jeremiah had no word of comfort to offer. He told the king that the city would be taken and burned, and that its king would go to Babylon as a captive.

In the midst of such confusion, a relative of the prophet who had no longer use for the worthless land of his inheritance in Anathoth offered in a spirit of irony to sell it to Jeremiah. The prophet seeing in compliance with this request an opportunity to show his faith in the fidelity of Jehovah to the land, notwithstanding the apostasy of its people, bought the field, and thereby brought upon himself further derision. He hardly understood his own action, but believed it to be the will of Jehovah.

[3]Behold, the mounds, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence; and what thou hast spoken is come to
5 pass; and, behold, thou seest it. And thou hast said unto me,

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[1] He dismisses his "object-lesson" with words of approval rare upon his lips.

[2] *Pharaoh Hophra:* The fourth king of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, 585–569 B.C. He is mentioned only in the Bible and by Herodotus. His chief ambition was to gain for Egypt her old Asiatic control, but his efforts met with no success. Babylonian domination extended to the borders of Egypt under Nebuchadnezzar.

[3] Jer. 32:24–27 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

O Lord Jehovah, "Buy thee the field for money, and call witnesses"; whereas the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

Then came the word of Jehovah unto Jeremiah, saying,
10 "Behold, I am Jehovah, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?"[1]

Jeremiah a Prisoner

But no suggestion of return of the exiles could atone for the immediate effect of Jeremiah's prediction of the unfavorable outcome of the siege. His utterances could only be interpreted as counsel to surrender, and were not calculated to put courage into the hearts of the defenders of the city who could but hope for some sudden deliverance such as that of Isaiah's day. We can imagine the worshipers of Jehovah contrasting Jeremiah's grim predictions with those of Isaiah under the former siege.

[2] Then the princes said unto the king, "Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death; forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them:
5 for this man seeketh not the welfare of his people, but the hurt." And Zedekiah the king said, "Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you." Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon[3] of Malchijah the king's son, that was in the court of the guard: and

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[1] In this act we see Jeremiah holding with what seems almost stubbornness to his belief in the possibility of a reinstated Judah. The statement of lines 10–11 is indeed a triumph of faith.

[2] Jer. 38:4–6 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] The dungeon was probably an old cistern, an ignominious prison indeed for the prophet. The story of the death of another prophet, Uriah, is told in Jer. 26:20–24, as follows: "And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of Jehovah, Uriah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim; and he prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Uriah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt. And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, namely, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him, into Egypt; and they fetched forth Uriah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king, who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people." Jeremiah was fortunate in escaping with his life. For the full story see Jer., chap. 38.

they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire.[1]

From the dungeon Jeremiah was rescued by an officer of the king's household and placed under guard in the courtyard of the prison. From this point he was allowed to come and go with a certain degree of freedom.

A new element had by this time come into the situation. The king of Egypt approached with his army to the defense of the city. The Babylonians were drawn off temporarily, giving a brief respite in the siege. A messenger from the king brought Jeremiah secretly into the palace where in the hope of some such message as that of Isaiah he was questioned as to the fate of the city. Note Jeremiah's characteristic reply.

Thus saith Jehovah,[2] the God of Israel, "Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me: Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city; and they shall take it, and burn it with fire."

Thus saith Jehovah, "Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us; for they shall not depart. For though he had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet would they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire."[3]

During the temporary break in the siege Jeremiah attempted to go to Anathoth to look after his property. This act was interpreted as an effort to reach the Babylonians, and he was seized and imprisoned in the dungeon in the house of one Jonathan the scribe. The king, unable to satisfy himself without the further word of the prophet, again sent secretly for him, and asked for a message from

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[1] There was here a real problem to those who held to their belief that the power of Babylonia would be quickly broken. To them Jeremiah seemed a dangerous man and a menace to the city. This incident shows the weakness of Zedekiah in the hands of his princes.

[2] Jer. 37:7–10 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[3] Jeremiah is bending all his energies to save the city from being burned and its people from the outrages of a victorious soldiery. He risks his life in vain, however.

Jehovah. Jeremiah was in imminent danger of losing his life. Branded as a traitor, a word from the king would have ended all. He knew his danger, yet with no thought of himself pleaded with the king to avert, by a timely surrender, the coming horrors of the sacking and burning of the city.

Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah,[1] "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: If thou wilt go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand." And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen away to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me."[2] But Jeremiah said, "They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of Jehovah, in that which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well with thee, and thy soul shall live. But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that Jehovah hath showed me: Behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say, Thy familiar friends have set thee on, and have prevailed over thee: now that thy feet are sunk in the mire, they are turned away back. And they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans; and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire."

The Fall of Jerusalem

But the king, fearing his princes, allowed the siege to continue until after many months a breach in the walls[3] was made and the

[1] Jer. 38:17–23 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] Note the littleness of the king who for fear of personal mockery from renegade Jews will sacrifice a city. For Zedekiah must surely by this time have been convinced that Jeremiah spoke the truth (lines 7–10). The mockery of the members of the king's own household when they are seized by the conqueror will be worse than that which he fears.

[3] *A breach in the walls:* To those who are familiar with modern warfare the length of time which ancient cities withstood a siege is remarkable. The walls of a city were its chief defense. Thus Jerusalem, stripped of its valiant men and all its wealth, was able to stand a considerable siege before falling into the hands of the enemy.

army of Nebuchadnezzar poured into the city. Under cover of the night Zedekiah and his guard escaped by way of the king's gardens, but the party was discovered by the Babylonians, when but a few miles from the city. They were captured and taken to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah in Hamath. No quarter was given to Zedekiah. His eyes were put out, his sons and his guard killed, and he himself was sent in fetters to Babylon. The story of the destruction of the city as told in the memoirs of Jeremiah is graphic.[1]

> And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem. Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the residue of the people that remained in the city, the deserters also that fell away to him, and the residue of the people that remained. But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, that had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.[2]

The Last Days of Jeremiah

Jeremiah was too important a man to be overlooked by Nebuchadnezzar. He was given his choice, to go to Babylon and live in comfort or to remain with the hopelessly poor and inefficient little group of Jews left in the ruined city. With the latter he cast in his lot, under Gedaliah who was appointed governor of the colony by Nebuchadnezzar. The scattered Jews who had fled to places of safety prior to the siege gathered again and planting and sowing was resumed in the long-forsaken fields. But the life of the colony was broken up by a conspiracy from within, in which Gedaliah was killed and many of his sympathizers as well. The leaders who remained, fearing lest Nebuchadnezzar should hold them responsible for the death of Gedaliah,[3] resolved to go down

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[1] Jer. 39:8–10 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

[2] Note that the king of Babylon does not wish to depopulate the land entirely, but to maintain there a harmless colony. He would doubtless have preferred to spare the city had it been safe to do so.

[3] *Gedaliah:* seems to have been a brave man, but he was not able to cope with the difficult situation. For the full story of this incident and the record of the remainder of the prophet's life in the little colony, read Jer., chaps. 40, 41, 42, 43, 44.

into Egypt for safety. Jeremiah uttered a last unheeded protest, and followed the people into their self-appointed exile. In a foreign land against whose enticements he had set his face for a life time, old and spent with suffering, Jeremiah did not fail, in the atmosphere of idolatry into which his companions so easily settled, to lift his voice against strange gods. The last words which have come down to us are words of warning to those who in Egypt burned incense to the Queen of Heaven.

[1]Therefore hear ye the word of Jehovah, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt:

"Behold, I have sworn by my great name," saith Jehovah, "that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, As the Lord Jehovah liveth. Behold, I watch over them for evil, and not for good; and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. And they that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, few in number; and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose word shall stand, mine, or theirs. And this shall be the sign unto you," saith Jehovah, "that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil:" Thus saith Jehovah, "Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, who was his enemy, and sought his life."

The Contribution of Jeremiah

Whether Jeremiah died in Egypt or upon Palestinian soil, or eventually joined the exiles in Babylon, we do not know. It remains only to gather from the preceeding pages the essence of his contribution to the religion of the Hebrews, and to reflect upon his character. Self-forgetting, courageous, and loyal, his message forced him to hide a heart which was bleeding with sorrow for his people, in a stern and rigid proclamation of the displeasure of

[1] Jer. 44:26–30 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

Jehovah. He literally laid down his life for his enemies, not suddenly and in spectacular heroism, but patiently, day by day, in ignominy and persecution, through a period of fifty years. His spirit was his greatest contribution to the religion of his people.

In Jeremiah also we see dawning a conception of the importance of the individual in his relation to God, a relation depending not upon residence in Palestine nor upon worship at the Temple in Jerusalem, but upon the attitude of the individual heart of the Jew wherever he might turn to Jehovah for help. This conception carried with it unlimited faith in the power of Jehovah over all the nations of the earth, and his ability to carry out his purposes regardless of the attitude of the chosen people.

Not only this, but more clearly than any of his predecessors does Jeremiah emphasize the willingness of Jehovah to forgive and to change his purpose of punishment into blessing if only "ye will turn from your evil way."[1]

> "And ye shall seek me, and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart."
>
> "I am Jehovah the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for me?"

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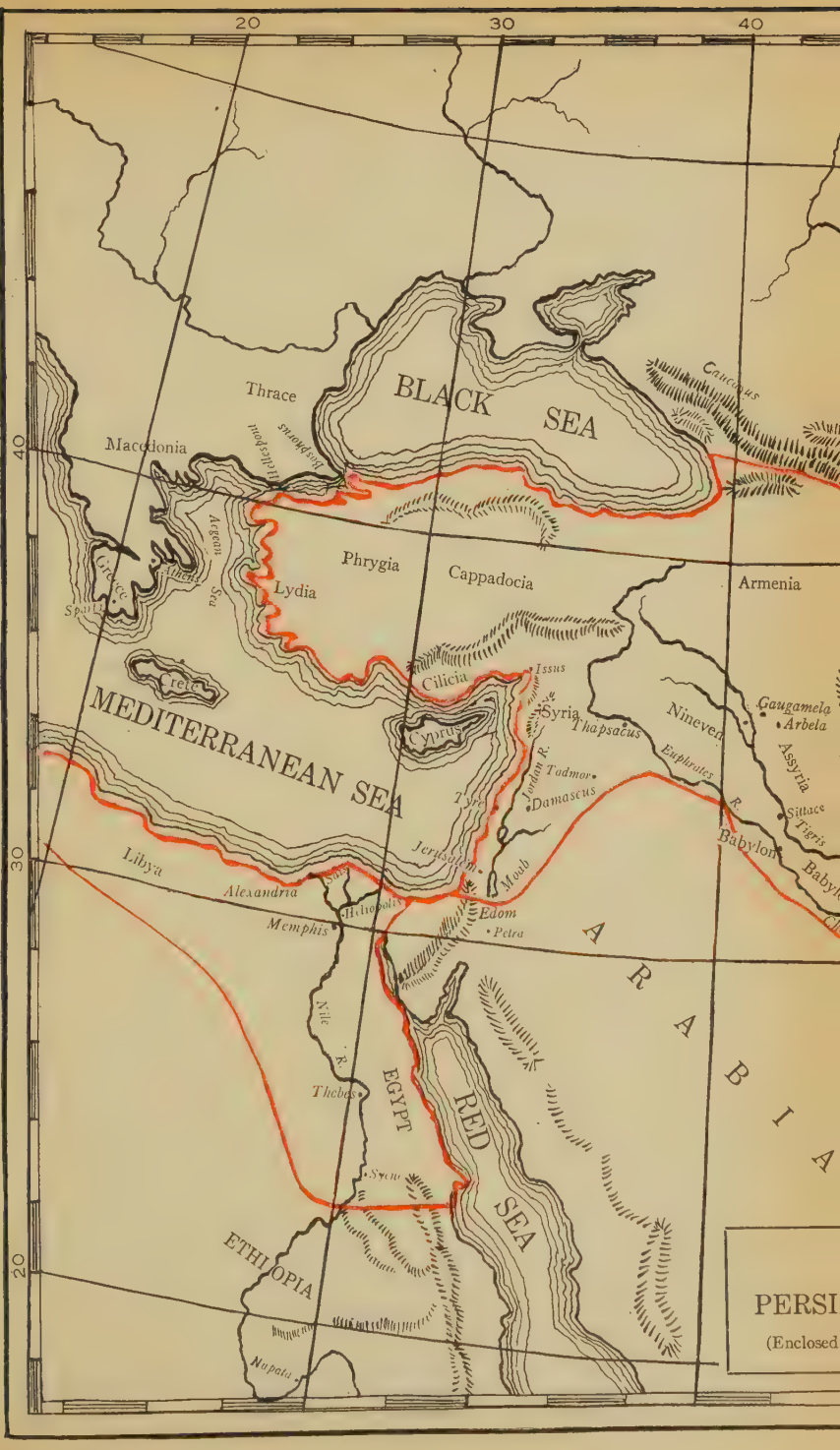
[1] A comparison of the lives of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah leads us to raise the question whether sympathy is not the greatest motive power in human life. Could Isaiah with his commanding presence, his lofty conception of Jehovah, but with his aloofness from the people, have accomplished as much as Jeremiah whose heart was continually torn with the anguish of the suffering nation? Was Jeremiah's life and work a step in the progress toward our modern idea of God as the essence of love and sympathy? Has every man his own particular work to do in the world, a necessary work without which a link in the chain, however small, is missing?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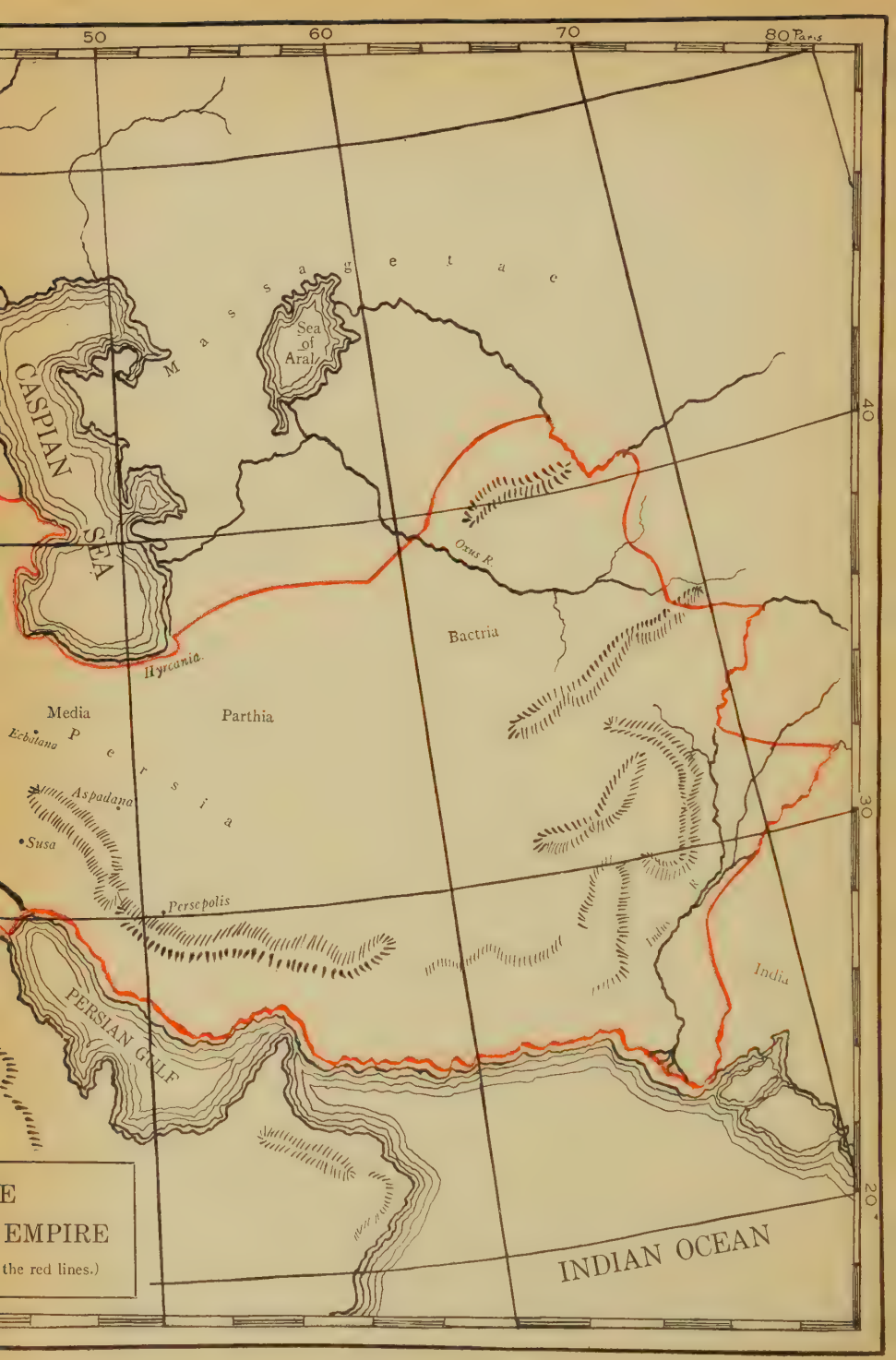

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TABLE OF IMPORTANT HISTORICAL EVENTS

B.C. — The Persian Period of Jewish History

586	Jerusalem captured by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and all the people of Judah except "the poorest of the land" taken captive to Babylonia.
	Ezekiel commenced his work of prophesying among the exiles a little later.
561	Nebuchadnezzar succeeded upon the throne of Babylon by his son Evil-Merodach.
	Jehoiachin, king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had kept in a dungeon, is liberated by Evil-Merodach and honored as a royal prisoner.
558	Evil-Merodach assassinated by Nergal-sharezer who seizes the throne for himself.
554	Nergal-sharezer dies and is succeeded by Labashi-Marduk, his young son, who was murdered by his nobles after a reign of nine months.
	Nabonidus chosen king by the conspirators.
549	Cyrus, king of Persia and of Anshan (a province of Elam) and a vassal of Media, overthrows the Median king, and himself becomes king of the great empire of the Medes; but he fixes his title as "King of Persia."
545	Cyrus defeats Croesus, the wealthy king of Lydia in Asia Minor, and pushes his conquests as far as the Aegean Sea.
	The "prophet of the Exile" (Isa., chaps. 40–55) begins to preach in Babylonia.
538	Cyrus enters Babylon without resistance.
	Exiles begin to return in small numbers to Judah. Shesh-bazzar, perhaps a son of Jehoiachin, becomes the first governor of Judah.
	Zerubbabel, probably a nephew of Shesh-bazzar, succeeds him as governor of Judah.
529	Cambyses succeeds to the throne of Persia upon the death of his father, Cyrus the Great.
525	Cambyses completes the conquest of Egypt.
523?	Gaumata, a pretended son of Cyrus, seizes the throne of Persia.
522	Cambyses on his way home from Egypt commits suicide.
	Revolts break out all over the Persian empire.
521	Gaumata slain by conspirators, who place Darius upon the throne.
520	Darius undertakes to reduce revolting Babylon and other rebellious provinces to submission; this task requires a full year.
	Haggai and Zechariah arouse Zerubbabel and the people of Judah to the rebuilding of the temple.
516	Completion and dedication of the temple.
490	Battle of Marathon, in which the Greeks defeat a Persian army, much larger than their own

486	Xerxes becomes king of Persia upon the death of his father, Darius.
	Egypt revolts from Persia, but was at once reduced to submission by Xerxes.
480	Battle of Thermopylae, where the Spartans made a heroic stand against an overwhelming force of Persians.
	The Greeks win a great naval victory over Persia at Salamis.
479	The Greeks defeat the Persians at Plataea, and drive them back into Asia.
464	Artaxerxes I succeeds to the throne of Persia upon the death of Xerxes.
459–453	Athens sent an army against Memphis to aid Egypt in throwing off the Persian yoke. Though successful at first, the Persian general Megabyzus after a six years' war expelled the Greeks and subdued Egypt.
444	Nehemiah, cupbearer to Artaxerxes, leads an expedition to Jerusalem and rebuilds the walls of the city, over which he was appointed governor.
432	Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem after a visit to Babylon.
	Ezra leads an expedition from Babylon to Jerusalem and institutes a religious reform, based upon a new revision of the Mosaic law.
424	Artaxerxes I dies and Xerxes II, his son, becomes king of Persia.
	Xerxes II after a few weeks is slain by Sogdianus, his half-brother, who seizes the throne.
	Sogdianus in turn is slain by Ochus, another half-brother of Xerxes II, who ascended the throne as Darius II (Nothus).
404	Darius II dies and is succeeded by his oldest son Artaxerxes II.
401	Cyrus, the younger brother of Artaxerxes II, leads an army, including 10,000 Greek mercenaries, against Babylon but is defeated and slain. (The story of the return of the Greeks is told by Xenophon in *The Anabasis*.)
359	Artaxerxes III (Ochus) succeeds his father upon the Persian throne.
345	The Jews join the Phoenicians and Egyptians in a revolt against Persia, which is put down by Bagoses, the Persian general, who oppressed Judah for seven years.
338	Artaxerxes III is poisoned by Bagoses, who placed the king's young son, Arses, upon the throne.
336	Arses is in turn slain by Bagoses, who gave the throne to Darius III, a great-grandson of Artaxerxes II.
336	Alexander the Great becomes king of Macedonia.
333	Alexander defeats a great Persian army in the battle of the Granicus.
	Darius hopelessly beaten by Alexander in the battle of Issus.
332	Alexander conquers Egypt.
331	Alexander again defeats Darius at Gaugamela.
330	Alexander pursues Darius into Media, where the latter is slain by his own soldiers, and the Persian Empire comes to an end.

CHAPTER XII

EZEKIEL, THE MAN OF VISIONS

To the surrounding nations and to us who have followed its story, the siege and fall of Jerusalem seemed the closing chapter in the history of the Hebrew people. Not so however to the prophets of Jehovah. In righteous dissatisfaction with their present, they were ever beholding in imagination a new and better future and bending themselves under the burden of bringing it to pass.

We must now retrace our steps in point of time to 597 B.C. when the first great company of Hebrews passed out of the gates of Jerusalem and started upon their weary march of eight or nine hundred miles to the city of Babylon.[1] In that company was the king, Jehoiachin, and with him all the princes and noble families of Jerusalem, as well as skilled craftsmen and tradesmen, in all a company numbering about ten thousand men, women, and children. Nebuchadnezzar and his predecessors had too long trusted the fidelity of the Hebrew kings. In the selection of these his captives he assured himself that there remained in the city of Jerusalem no strong leaders of noble, or even of common blood of sufficient ability to organize a revolt. We have already followed the vacillations of the weak king Zedekiah and his courtiers, and know that, while Nebuchadnezzar underrated the tenacity with which the humblest Hebrews clung to their ideal of an independent state, he was not mistaken in the character of the men whom he left in the city. Henceforth the blood and brawn of the Hebrew people were no longer in Palestine, but in Babylon. There by the "river Chebar," a long navigable canal which intersected a rich tract of land between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers, south and east of the city of Babylon, in the midst of fertile plains, was planted the colony of Hebrews.

The term "captive" does not rightly describe the relation of the Hebrews in Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar. He was a wise and

[1] See chap. xi of this book, p. 153, and II Kings 24:10–18.

not ungenerous ruler. He sought to disable the smaller states which were his by conquest, rather than to oppress them. His building operations are among the most famous of the ancient world. He rebuilt Babylon on a magnificent scale, and made it a city of splendor and delight. Among the Hebrews in the colony by the Chebar, prosperity reigned just in proportion to the industry and ability of the individuals. Were we considering the literature of the Hebrews primarily we should also see that, stimulated by the intellectual atmosphere of Babylon and the emotions aroused by their new situation, as well as by the relief from pressing political responsibilities, the Hebrews themselves developed great literary activity. In this period were produced a large number of the greatest masterpieces of their literature[1] as well as a new revision of their national history and their law code.[2] Those who had been leaders in Jerusalem had doubtless the opportunity to lead in the life of this community, and we may easily imagine after a few years of residence a thriving colony, whose prosperity was the greater because so closely related to the city of Babylon.

But external prosperity does not always reflect peace of mind. The Hebrews could not yet easily think of their God as accessible in a foreign land. The prophets of Jehovah had but recently declared that worship was acceptable to him only in his temple at Jerusalem. There seemed to the less loyal Hebrews but one alternative, and that, to accept the gods of Babylon and seek protection and prosperity from them. Moreover the Babylonian religion was all-pervasive and alluring. It entered into every act of business or social life. Contracts and legal agreements made even with Hebrews were bound by oaths in the name of the gods of

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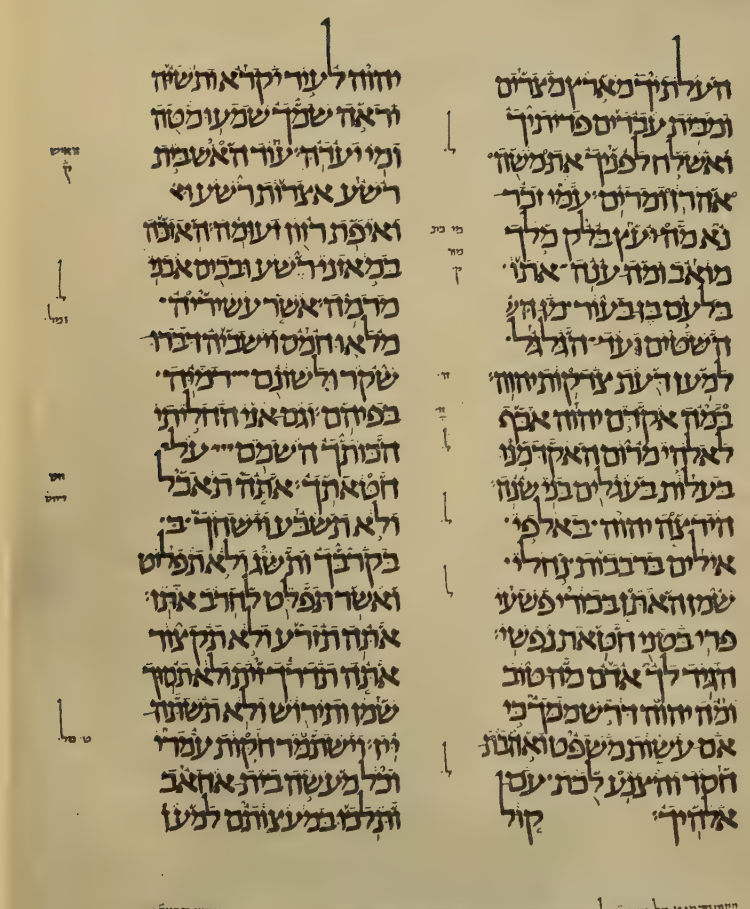
[1] *Masterpieces of literature:* It can hardly be that all the literature of this period has come down to us. The Book of Job which is a dramatic poem dealing with the problem "Why do the righteous suffer?" may have been written during this period, as well as many of the most beautiful of the Psalms.

[2] *Law Code:* This version of the Hebrew law may be found in the Book of Leviticus. It contains a rewriting of the laws which had been previously presented in Deuteronomy, and additional laws for use in the new city of Jerusalem when the people should return to it, for it was in confident anticipation of this event that the law was prepared. To this book, as to Deuteronomy, the name of Moses was attached as representing the great lawgiver of Israel's early days. See note on Deuteronomy, p. 141.



PASSAGE FROM MICAH, SHOWING HEBREW TEXT USED IN BABYLONIA

Babylonia. The worship in the temples was magnificent. Doubtless a large majority of the people would have been more than content to turn to Nebo and Bel, had it not been for the presence of certain priests and prophets of Jehovah among the captives. To them the message of Jehovah had been so real that although separated from what they deemed his land by a long and weary march of almost a thousand miles they could not believe themselves to be separated from Jehovah's power and presence.

Ezekiel, the first of the prophets of this period whose work we shall consider, was of the priestly class, of the family of Zadok, one of that aristocracy of the priesthood whose ministry was in the temple at Jerusalem. Perhaps Ezekiel may himself have assisted there upon occasion. Although he never alludes to Jeremiah, he was surely a younger contemporary of the older prophet, and could hardly have failed to know of his work, and to be influenced by it. Through all that long and trying reign of Jehoiakim when Jeremiah was trying constantly, but in vain, to show the king his folly, Ezekiel must have been watching with equal anxiety the outcome of events. Perhaps, at a later time when Jerusalem had fallen, Jeremiah's knowledge that Ezekiel was at work in Babylon was an added reason for his choosing to remain among the faint-hearted, scattered, and bewildered populace of the ruined city.

But what was the problem which faced Ezekiel in the colony by the Chebar? The hope and promise of Isaiah so useful in his own day was now the fixed principle upon which the Hebrews in Babylon as well as in Jerusalem confidently relied. Some said, "We have offended Jehovah. He has brought us into captivity as a punishment, but his anger will soon be appeased and we shall return to our own land." Some said, "Our fathers sinned and we are bearing their punishment." "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" was a current proverb at this time. Many devout souls there were who wept over their sins, and longed with unspeakable yearning for the Temple.

"By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion."[1]

[1] Read this Psalm, No. 137.

But few or none save the prophets, and chief among the latter Ezekiel, could admit the possibility that Jerusalem would not eventually shake off the yoke of Babylon, or negotiate a peace which would permit the people to return to an unharmed city.[1]

To impress Jehovah's purpose to destroy unrepentant and idolatrous Jerusalem, and to interpret that purpose to the captives in Babylon was the difficult task of Ezekiel. Should the news of the destruction of Jerusalem come before at least a nucleus of the people could be persuaded that it was Jehovah himself who willed its destruction, faith in Jehovah would not survive the fall of the city. That Jehovah was responsible for the city's disasters and that therefore the only escape was through repentance and turning from idolatry Ezekiel believed. Had he not at least partially succeeded in his task of persuasion, faith in Jehovah would have perished.

The Call of Ezekiel

Ezekiel was a strange, stern man. He received his messages in a spectacular way and delivered them as conspicuously. To the ordinary reader the story of his call is a confused picture of man and creatures, of wings and wheels and glowing shapes from which proceeded a voice saying:[2]

> [3]Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, who have rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed

[1] "Jehovah's city is inviolate," that is, it cannot be entered by a foreign army or destroyed, because it is the dwelling-place of the god of the people, was the watchword of the people.

[2] From the period of the captivity until the final destruction of the second Jerusalem in the first century A.D. there was an increasing tendency among the Hebrews to employ as a literary device for impressing their ideas the most elaborate visions. Perhaps this was due in part to the necessity that they should write in such a way that only the initiated would understand. Their literature was many times treasonable in its claims and anticipations and if understood by the nations who were their rulers would have brought more bitter persecutions than they were already receiving. But visions were also a characteristic of Babylonian literature, and doubtless the Hebrews were influenced in their literary style by the examples of literature which commanded their admiration in Babylonia, and they probably gathered from their surroundings there many of the images which are found in the visions. It will be well worth while to read a few chapters from Ezekiel in order to get the impressions of these visions, even though they be not easily comprehended, and may sometimes seem fantastic and meaningless.

[3] Ezek. 2:3–6.

against me even unto this very day. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will refuse (for they are a rebellious house), shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, or of their words, though briers and thorns[1] are with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

The prophet's acceptance of the commission was no less strangely clothed. He beheld a hand holding a leather roll of a book upon which were inscribed woes and lamentations.[2] This book the prophet was commanded to eat. Having summoned his courage to devour it he found it sweet and wholesome. By this we judge that he intended to assert that although assigned a mission as uninviting as that of Jeremiah, he accepted it from Jehovah, and found pleasure in its performance because it represented duty. But Ezekiel did not underrate his task, for he says:

> [3]So the Spirit lifted me up,[4] and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; and the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me. Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib,[5] that dwelt by the river Chebar; and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.

Denunciation of Jerusalem

For ten years the prophet denounced the people of Jerusalem with the exiled Hebrews as an audience, and in turn exhorted his hearers to heed Jehovah's warnings. All the abominations of

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[1] *Briers and thorns:* Ezekiel's words were as little likely to be heeded as those of his predecessors among the prophets, and the path of his duty was to be a thorny one. His enemies would be as venomous and plentiful as the scorpions in that eastern land.

[2] Ezek. 2:8—3:3. [3] Ezek. 3:14, 15.

[4] * *The Spirit lifted me up:* Many persons consider this a description of a kind of trance into which Ezekiel fell. It is easier to understand it, however, as a figure meant by Ezekiel to express the uplifting experience of his soul when the conviction that he was destined to deliver the messages of Jehovah to his people in this most critical time was borne in upon his mind and heart.

[5] * *Tel-abib:* This name does not appear elsewhere, but it probably designates the particular portion of the general territory in which the Hebrews were settled.

idolatry which were reported to him by the frequent travelers from Jerusalem he clothed in the form of visions seen by himself. He assailed the worship of the sun, of beasts, and of idols, and then in wrath proclaimed Jehovah's message of destruction for the city.

[1]Then he said unto me, "Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have continually provoked me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.[2] Therefore will I also deal in wrath; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them."[3]

Then he[4] cried in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, "Cause ye them that have charge over the city to draw near, every man with his destroying weapon in his hand." And behold, six men came from the way of the upper gate, which lieth toward the north, every man with his slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man in the midst of them clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn[5] by his side. And they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar.

And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherubim[6] whereupon it was, to the threshold of the house;

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[1] Ezek. 8:17—9:11 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., with revisions).

[2] *The branch to their nose:* Possibly this act was a feature of the ceremonies of the worship of the sun. The Persian sun worshipers were said to hold a branch of date, palm, or other tree before their faces when worshiping the sun. It may, however, be only a phrase to indicate some expression of contempt for Jehovah.

[3] They have made Jehovah but one of many gods in his own land. He will not heed their calls.

[4] *He:* The visionary man who had carried Ezekiel in his imagination to Jerusalem. He is described in 8:2 as follows: "a likeness as of the appearance of fire, from his loins and downward fire, and from his loins and upward as the appearance of brightness, as it were glowing metal. And he put forth the form of a hand, and the Spirit lifted me up."

[5] *An inkhorn:* a case for holding reed pens, with an ink holder attached. It was carried in the girdle.

[6] *Cherubim:* These were possibly human-headed bull figures with wings. The descriptions of these strange figures vary in different portions of Ezekiel's visions, and elsewhere. Wherever they were, however, they indicated the special presence of Jehovah, and in the Temple where they had guarded the ark they had been said to be accompanied with a shining light. In Ezekiel's visions the "Glory of the Lord" appears riding upon the cherubim.

and he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writer's
20 inkhorn by his side. And Jehovah said unto him, "Go through
the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a
mark[1] upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry
over all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof."
And to the others he said in my hearing, "Go ye through the
25 city after him, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have
ye pity; slay utterly the old and the young men, and little
children and women; but come not near any upon whom is the
mark: and begin at my sanctuary." Then they began at the
old men that were before the house. And he said unto them,
30 "Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain; go ye
forth." And they went forth, and smote in the city. And it
came to pass, while they were smiting, and I was left, that I
fell upon my face, and cried, and said, "Ah Lord Jehovah!
wilt thou destroy all the remnant of Israel in the pouring of
35 thy wrath upon Jerusalem?"

Then said he unto me, "The sin of the house of Israel and
Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the
city full of injustice:[2] for they say, Jehovah hath forsaken the
land, and Jehovah seeth not. Mine eye shall not spare,
40 neither will I have pity, but I will bring their way upon their
head. And, behold, the man clothed in linen, who had the
inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done
as thou hast commanded me."

The Parable of the Eagle and the Cedar Twig

A serious problem confronted the prophet in the attitude of the citizens remaining in Jerusalem toward the Hebrews in captivity. The former said, "We are the righteous. Jehovah has carried away the wicked into captivity. We shall see them no more until his wrath is appeased. Our city will now be delivered." But Ezekiel met such reports with a parable of condemnation for confident Jerusalem and of comfort for the captives.

[3]And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, "Son of man, put forth a riddle,[4] and speak a parable unto the house

[1] *Set a mark:* to distinguish them from the idolaters.

[2] *Injustice:* That is, in the courts.

[3] Ezek., chap. 17 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., with further revisions).

[4] *Riddle, parable:* These terms are synonymous here, and the latter gives the better meaning. Note carefully the detailed interpretation of the parable of lines 1–28, in the remainder of the chapter.

of Israel; and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: A great eagle[1] with great wings and long pinions, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon,[2] and took the top of the cedar: he cropped off the topmost of the young twigs thereof, and carried it unto a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful soil; he placed it beside abundant waters; he set it as a slip that it might grow, and become a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches would turn toward him, and the roots thereof could be under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.

"There was also another great eagle[3] with great wings and many feathers; and, behold, this vine did bend its roots toward him, and shot forth its branches toward him, from the beds of its plantation, that he might water it. It was planted in a good soil by abundant waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it may wither; that all its fresh springing leaves may wither? and not by a strong arm or much people can it be raised from the roots thereof. Yea, behold, when planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the beds where it grew."

Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, "Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and brought them to him to Babylon. And he took of the family royal, and made a covenant with him; he also brought him under an oath, and took away the might of the land; that the kingdom might be submissive, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping his covenant it might serve him. But he[4] rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people.

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[1] *An eagle:* Nebuchadnezzar. Conquerors were frequently represented as eagles.

[2] *Lebanon:* the high mountain range in Northern Palestine, here taken to represent the land.

[3] *Another great eagle:* Egypt.

[4] *He:* King Zedekiah.

Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? shall he break the covenant, and yet escape? As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die. Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company help him in the war, when they cast up mounds and build forts, to cut off many persons. For he hath despised the oath by breaking the covenant; and behold, he had given his hand in pledge, and yet hath done all these things: he shall not escape. Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, I will even bring it upon his own head.[1] And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will enter into judgment with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me. And all his choice men in all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward every wind: and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken it.

"Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will also take of the lofty top of the cedar, and will plant it; I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I will plant it upon a high and lofty mountain: in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all birds of every feather; in the shade of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I, Jehovah, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I, Jehovah,[2] have spoken and have done it."

Jehovah Deals with Each Man Separately

Out of the darkest hours in the history of many nations have come great ideas and new light.

To Ezekiel, perplexed by the problem of what good could come out of the present situation, appeared a new theory of Jehovah.

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[1] *Mine oath, my covenant:* Jehovah's, because the king was always considered as the representative of the god of the land.

[2] Note the promise that the Hebrews now in Babylon, despised by their fellow-countrymen, but comprising the best blood of old Jerusalem, will be the nucleus of the

The city of Jerusalem must fall. The national life might be at an end. What would become of the people who were loyal and true to Jehovah? Was the proverb of the sour grapes just and true? Ezekiel was forced by his belief in the faithfulness and power of Jehovah to answer No, Jehovah will deal with men as individuals, not in masses, as in a nation. His message at this point is worth careful study because it marks a great step in the progress of religion toward a recognition of the responsibility of every man or woman for his own acts.

[1]The word of Jehovah came unto me again, saying, "What mean ye that ye use this proverb in the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall no more use this proverb in Israel. Behold, each soul is mine, the soul of the father, also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it alone shall die.[2]

"But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, and hath not wronged any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath taken nought by robbery, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; he that hath not given forth upon interest, neither hath taken any increase,[3] that hath withdrawn his hand from sin, hath executed true justice between man and man,[4] hath walked in my statutes,[5] and hath kept mine ordinances,[5] to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord Jehovah.

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new nation. To these men the folly of Zedekiah was even more apparent than in Jerusalem, for the strength of Babylon and the character of Nebuchadnezzar were best appreciated in his own country.

[1] Ezek. 18:1–5, 7–10, 14, 17*b*–19, 20–23.

[2] The significance of this series of passages cannot be overestimated. Jehovah had formerly been conceived of as dealing with people in large groups. The old Hebrew law required the extermination of a man and his family for the sin of the man. The worth of the individual soul to God had not yet appeared. Ezekiel first clearly states that henceforth Jehovah will deal with each man separately, rewarding and punishing each according to his acts. Moreover, he will gladly receive the repentant sinner who turns to him. He takes no delight in punishment, and much prefers that men should turn to him and live.

[3] Has not charged more than the legal rate of interest, or has not exacted interest from the poor who were unable to pay it.

[4] When acting as judge in the courts.

[5] *Statutes, ordinances:* that is, laws.

"If he have a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth any one of these things, and that doeth not any of those *duties*, that son shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.

"Now, lo, if a wicked father beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins, which he hath done, and feareth, and doeth not such like; and hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the sin of his father, he shall surely live. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, robbed his brother, and did that which is not good among his people, behold, he shall die in his iniquity."

Yet say ye, Wherefore doth not the son bear the sin of the father?[1] The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the sin of the father, neither shall the father bear the sin of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

Moreover if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: because of his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked?" saith the Lord Jehovah; "and not rather that he should return from his way, and live?"

This was a revolutionary view of Jehovah, for had not the old commandment described him as "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children even unto the third and fourth generation"?

The prophet argues with his hearers and drives home his lesson of the responsibility of each man for his own choice of life or death.

[2]But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth sin, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not just.[3] Hear now, O

[1] See the second commandment, Exod. 20:5, 6, the old law to which the people were accustomed.

[2] Ezek. 18:24–32 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., with revisions).

[3] The Hebrews could not readily comprehend the fact that Jehovah would receive the repentant sinner. They clung to the theory that Jehovah loved most the exercise of power, and that vengeance upon the sinner was his delight.

house of Israel: "Is not my way just? are not your ways unjust? When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth sin, and dieth therein; in his sin that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not just. O house of Israel, are not my ways just? are not your ways unjust?"

"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," saith the Lord Jehovah. "Return ye, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so sin shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," saith the Lord Jehovah: "wherefore turn yourselves, and live."

Consternation in Babylon

Meanwhile Jerusalem was under siege. One day the prophet's wife died, but so great was the anxiety of the community over the fate of Jerusalem that this calamity seemed but an incident. Ezekiel, absorbed in the common suspense, postpones his period of mourning in anticipation of that universal mourning in which his brethren would wail out their grief over fallen Jerusalem. At last the news came. The city had been destroyed, and soon might be expected the new accession to the colony, headed by the blinded Zedekiah, to be brought in by the generals of Nebuchadnezzar.

Could we but live through those first months in which the newcomers, no longer able to claim Jehovah's special favor, recounted to their fellows the events and scenes of the siege, the warnings of Jeremiah, the contradictions of the false prophets, the vacillations of the king; could we have heard their speculations in regard to Jehovah and the future, we could better understand the task of the prophets of these times.

The consternation of the community in Babylon which had been

expectantly waiting a recall was great. Where now was Jehovah,[1] since his city was destroyed? Many had refused to worship the gods of Babylonia. Now their own god had deserted his land. If indeed some had come to think of Jehovah as with them in Babylon, what was he worth, since he had not been able to resist the power of the gods of Babylon, represented by Nebuchadnezzar and his armies? Faith and reason staggered under the blow. The people were bewildered and confused. What of the future now? To whom could they appeal but to the prophet whose name was upon every lip, but whose words accomplished their purpose in but few of the hearts of his hearers.

[2]And as for thee, son of man, the children of thy people talk of thee on the streets and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to one another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from Jehovah. And they come unto thee, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but do them not; for with their words they show much love, but their heart goeth after their gain. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not.[3]

Jehovah the Shepherd of Israel

Henceforth Ezekiel spoke to a people who were full of sorrow and humility, and who needed comforting words. For these he had a message of hope. To hearts longing for the home land, and the Temple of Jehovah he gave promise of return. The old message of denunciation and coming punishment was almost entirely abandoned. The new conditions called for a new message.

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[1] We must keep in mind that the Hebrews regarded Jehovah as dwelling in Jerusalem. He could not dwell in a ruined city, and the very fact of its ruin showed that he had deserted it, whether because of weakness or anger no one knew.

[2] Ezek. 33:30–32.

[3] Ezekiel's speeches were interesting, strange, and stirring, but the people went to him from habit, and listened as people too frequently listen to sermons for the pleasure of the emotions stirred by them. Few practical results followed.

[1]For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: "Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd[2] seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture; and upon the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie down in a good fold; and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will lead them to pasture, saith the Lord Jehovah. I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: over the fat and the strong I will watch.

"And I will set up one shepherd over them and he shall feed them, even my servant David;[3] he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and my servant David prince among them; I, Jehovah, have spoken it.

"And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land;[4] and they shall dwell securely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in its season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield its fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they

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[1] Ezek. 34:11–16, 23–31 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver. with revisions).

[2] The figure of a shepherd was a favorite one for the ideal ruler promised by the prophets, as well as for Jehovah himself. The times demanded emphasis upon the tenderness of Jehovah and his care for his people.

[3] *My servant David:* To this kingless captive nation came the most wonderful dreams of the future—a kingdom, glorious in power, universal in authority, with all nations coming to it for counsel and judgment. The ideal ruler of this kingdom is always represented as a descendant of the House of David, the one king to whom the people looked back as a perfect head.

[4] *Evil beasts:* In the ideal kingdom peace and harmony between the wild beasts and man is always pictured.

shall be secure in their land; and they shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have broken the bars of their yoke, and have delivered them out of the hand of those that made bondmen of them. And they shall no more be a prey to the nations, neither shall the beasts of the earth devour them; but they shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up unto them a plantation for renown, and they shall be no more consumed with famine in the land, neither bear the contempt of the nations any more. And they shall know, that I Jehovah, their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people," saith the Lord Jehovah. "And ye my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are men, and I am your God," saith the Lord Jehovah.

The Vision of Dry Bones

Although strong in his own belief that Jehovah would restore at least the faithful of his people to their own land, what evidence could Ezekiel bring to convince the disappointed and hopeless ones in the community that the future promised hope. Years passed. The people lost their spirit, and to many Jehovah seemed but a name. Those who hoped with Ezekiel feared that all national feeling would be lost before opportunity for return could come, for such an opportunity might be expected only in the breaking-up of the Babylonian empire. All save the prophet lost heart. He vividly pictured his faith in the power of Jehovah to revive even the dry and bleaching bones of the Hebrew nation in captivity, and to fulfil his promises to the faithful.

[1]The hand of Jehovah was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of Jehovah, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.[2] And he caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord Jehovah, thou knowest." Again he said unto me, "Speak to these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of Jehovah. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah.

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[1] Ezek. 37:1–14 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., with revisions).

[2] This vision seems like a dream, rather than a literary device. It appears to bring into new relations the prophet's despair over his people and the power of Jehovah.

10 Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah."

So I spoke as I was commanded: and as I spoke, there was 15 a noise, and, behold, an earthquake; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and, lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, "Speak unto the wind, and say to the wind, Thus saith the 20 Lord Jehovah: Come from the four winds, O wind, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." So I spoke as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Then he said unto me, "Son of man, these bones are the 25 whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.[1] Therefore speak, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will open your graves,[2] and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of 30 Israel. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have opened your graves, and caused you to come up out of your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land: and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken it and performed it, saith 35 Jehovah."

How long Ezekiel continued his labors we do not know. Whether he lived to see the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the succession of his son Evil-Merodach, under whom the captive Hebrew king, Jehoiachin, was liberated and treated as a royal prisoner, we cannot say. He need have reached no great age to have seen the assassination of Evil-Merodach in 558, and the succession in one year, 554 B.C., of three different kings of Babylon. But his work as we have it reflects no such turbulent conditions, but rather the serene contemplation of one who dwells upon his visions of the

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[1] *Clean cut off:* We are dead as a nation, nothing can revive us.

[2] Not literally, but figuratively. The exiles buried in exile among the nations of the world, viz., in Egypt, Babylonia, and elsewhere would be gathered together in their old home, and the nation now dead would be restored to new life, prosperity and power.

future with delight. The later chapters of his book are devoted to a most elaborate description of the new Jerusalem of his dreams, in which he pictures a wonderful temple, with perfect worship of the Holy God, in the midst of a land where "waters fail not," and "trees bring forth fruit every month," and where no man, be he stranger or homeborn, shall oppress his brother, and none shall fail in his duty to Jehovah.

Ezekiel as a man seems to stand aloof from the people. His messages are couched in stately phrases, in sharp contrast with the broken utterances of Jeremiah's sympathetic heart. Perhaps his early training in the exclusive circle of the temple priests had made him something of an aristocrat. None the less was he able to interpret Jehovah in a new light. No longer would the prophets of Israel address their promises to a nation, nor even to those individuals alone who had been true to Jehovah, but to every member of the Hebrew community who of his own free will should choose the way of Jehovah and walk in it. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" was supplemented by "the soul that repents and turns from its evil way shall live and his sin shall be remembered no more." And so by this transition step the God of the Hebrews might in time come to be understood as extending his forgiveness and blessing to men of other nations should they freely choose to serve him.[1]

[1] Can we appreciate the increase in the estimate of the value of human life, which is bound up in the idea that Jehovah considers and deals with each individual man according to his own acts? That which Jehovah valued could not be disregarded by men. This was the chief contribution of Ezekiel. How does it compare in value with the contributions of the prophets who preceded him?

CHAPTER XIII

ISAIAH OF BABYLON

To Nebuchadnezzar Babylonia owed more than her wonderful city and her monumental buildings. Largely by his military genius the empire had been wrested from the Assyrians, and by his political sagacity and consideration for his vassal states the otherwise unrelated parts of the empire were held together in more or less loyal cohesion during his reign of forty-three years. At his death he bequeathed a well-ordered and powerful empire to his son Evil-Merodach.

One of the acts of this new king was the liberation of Jehoiachin who had been confined in Babylonian prisons since the coming of the first deportation.[1] We can easily see that in the bitterness of their disappointment at the fall of Jerusalem the Jews may have become restive, especially since the new king was known to be weak in character and rule. After a brief reign of two years Evil-Merodach[2] was assassinated by his brother-in-law, who followed much more closely the policy of Nebuchadnezzar. For four years this new king labored, building great temples and palaces and guarding himself well against the conspiracies which he feared. Then he died, leaving his throne to his son, a mere child, who within nine months was murdered by his nobles.

Nabonidus,[3] a prince of Babylon, was chosen king by the conspirators. His interests were chiefly religious, and he spent his energies in building new temples and renovating old ones, making collections of old gods and manufacturing new ones, at the same time neglecting his kingdom and its affairs, deeming it impossible that one who devoted himself to the gods so faithfully should ever lack their support and favor.

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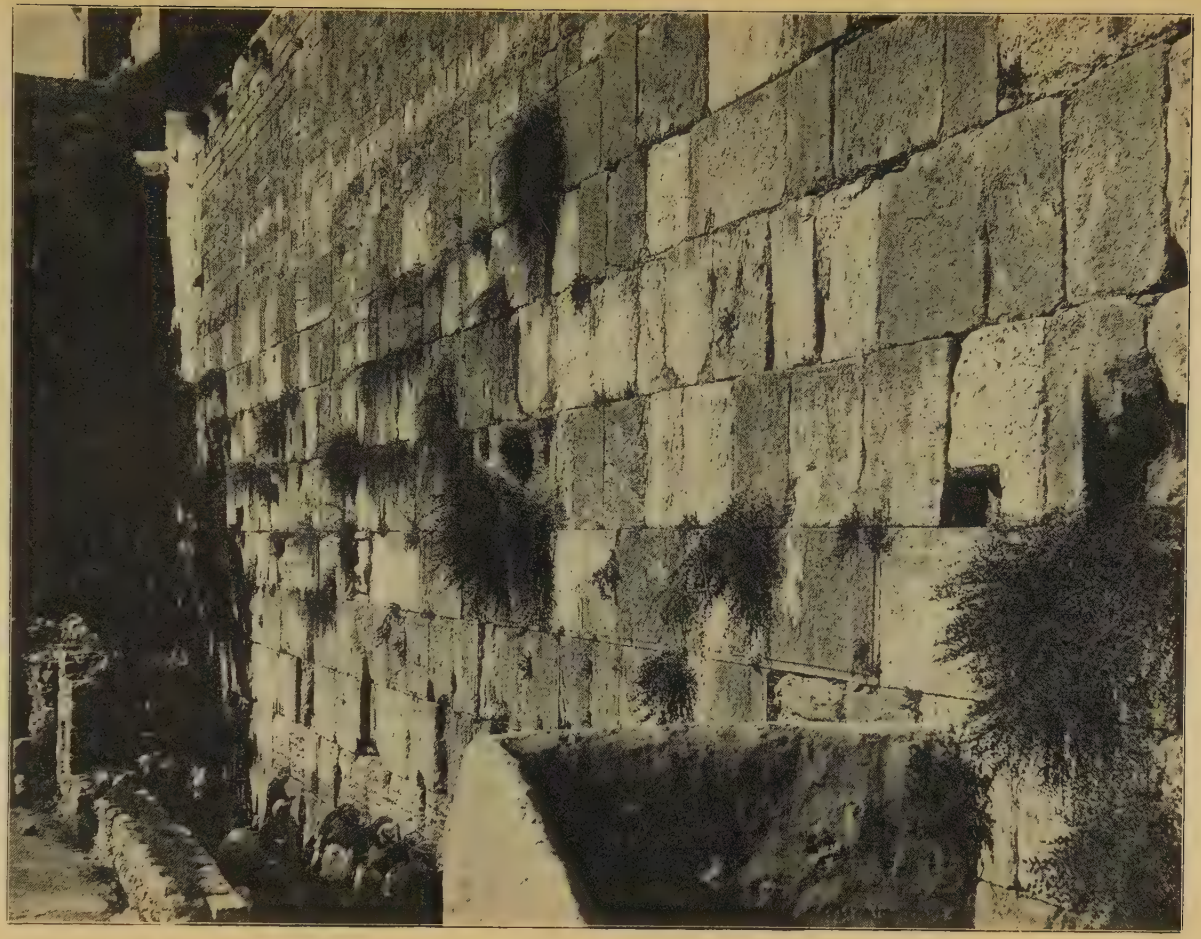
[1] See chap. xi, p. 153.

[2] *Evil-Merodach:* See Table of Historical Events, p. 169.

[3] *Nabonidus:* See Table of Historical Events, p. 169. Nabonidus left the government of the city chiefly to his son Bel-shar-uzur, who carried on the government without the title. He joined the king of Egypt in an alliance against Cyrus of Persia. When Cyrus entered Babylon as conqueror the son of Nabonidus was killed and he himself was banished to Karamania.



THE WAILING-PLACE

In the midst of all these changes the Hebrews were not disinterested spectators. They possibly suffered much in the death of so able a monarch as Nebuchadnezzar and under his successor fared worse. There is ample opportunity for oppression and injustice under anarchistic government, and anarchy was rampant in Babylon during all these years. The Babylonian gods seemed not to be demonstrating their ability to maintain a strong government. "Were they losing their power, or was Babylonia in disfavor with them?" questioned the Hebrews.

Meanwhile, something of momentous importance to Babylon, and to the captives was taking place in the North. One of the great world-conquerors of antiquity, Cyrus the Great,[1] was rapidly coming to the front. Originally he had held the throne of Persia and of Anzan, a province of Elam, as a vassal of the great Median empire. By a series of events, some of which were natural, and some the result of intrigues, Cyrus himself assumed the throne of Media about 551 B.C. He quickly established himself south of the Tigris, and north of Babylonia, and then proceeded to the conquest of Lydia, on the western coast of Asia Minor, whose king, Croesus, controlled the whole of Asia Minor. Following this the Greek colonies were attacked and brought into subjection, then the less civilized peoples east of his empire.

By no people more eagerly than by the Jews in Babylonia was the course of Cyrus watched. Rumors of his high character in addition to those of his military prowess assured captive nations of lenient treatment, perhaps even the return of some to their native lands. Would such an all-conquering hero stop short of Babylon? To others in Babylon besides the Hebrews the prospect was not unpleasing, for among the residents in Babylonia were many deported peoples whose interest in the city was that of adoption rather than of blood.

In this crisis a prophet, perhaps the greatest among the Hebrews, appeared. We will call him Isaiah of Babylonia, because in the confusion of the passing years his wonderful utterances were bound

[1] *Cyrus the Great:* This remarkable king is the hero of Xenophon's *Cyropoedia*. The student will find it most interesting to search for information concerning him in histories and biographies.

up with those of Isaiah of Jerusalem whose work preceded his by more than half a century.[1] He is really unknown, not only in his name, but also as to the facts of his life, save only that he was among the captive Hebrews in Babylonia. His words portray not himself, but the glory of Jehovah, and the great manifestation of his power and favor which was about to appear.

This man like his predecessors had his peculiar task. The political upheavals in Babylonia and the appearance of Cyrus seemed to promise the long-hoped-for opportunity for a return to Palestine. How many of the people were ready for such a movement?[2] To arouse the old national spirit, to kindle hope and enthusiasm in dead and indifferent souls, to build up a faith in Jehovah which would result in the return of the people, and the restoration of Jerusalem to something of her former splendor—that was the great task which Isaiah of Babylonia joyously and ardently assumed and in doing so gave expression to the most sublime conception of Jehovah which the Hebrews had yet known.

He announces his message as one of comfort to a people whose suffering had more than compensated for past sins.

[3] "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,"
Saith your God.
"Speak ye tenderly to Jerusalem,[4]
And say unto her,
That her hard service is accomplished,
That her guilt is pardoned;
That she hath received of Jehovah's hand
Double for all her sins."

[1] The work of this prophet, as we have it, appears in chaps. 40–55 of the Book of Isaiah. Chaps. 1–39 of this book we have studied as the work of Isaiah of Jerusalem. Chaps. 56 and following seem to be from still later poets and prophets. For what reason or by what accident all were bound together, and the chapters numbered consecutively we do not know. Each section of the book is distinguishable from the others by differences in language and literary style, and by the background of history which it reflects.

[2] Recall the spirit of indifference against which Ezekiel had worked, and the superior attractions of Babylonia as a place of residence, in view of the generous rule of Cyrus which was confidently expected.

[3] Isa. 40:1–11.

[4] Addressed to ruined Jerusalem, but intended to encourage especially the people of the captivity whom the prophet was trying to inspire to a great movement in favor of return to Palestine.

Hark! One is crying, "Prepare ye in the wilderness the
way of Jehovah,
Make level in the desert a highway for our God.
Let every valley be exalted, and every mountain and hill
made low:
And the crooked be made straight, and the rough places
plain."
And the glory of Jehovah will be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together;
For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.[1]

Hark! One is saying, "Cry," and one answered, "What
shall I cry?"
"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the
flower of the field:
The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; when the breath
of Jehovah bloweth upon it:
The grass withereth, the flower fadeth;
But the word of our God shall stand for ever."

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion,[2] get thee up on a
high mountain;
O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy
voice with strength;
Lift it up, be not afraid;
Say unto the cities of Judah, "Behold, your God!"

Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and
his arm will rule for him:
Behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before
him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd,[3] he will gather
the lambs in his arm,
He will carry them in his bosom,
Gently leading those that have their young.

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[1] The prophet in his imagination pictures Israel taking the straight road to Palestine, across deserts and over mountains, all obstacles being removed from her path.

[2] *Zion:* The name of the hill upon which Jerusalem was located, now used as the name of the city as Jerusalem in the first strophe, to represent the nation.

[3] *Like a shepherd:* The shepherd and his flock were common figures used to represent Jehovah and his people, especially in this later period of her history.

Jehovah the Creator of the World

But the power of Jehovah to perform this great act of deliverance must be proven, and we find him pictured as the omnipotent creator inspiring with strength and courage all those who serve him. Beside this great God, who could mention the manufactured gods of Babylon?

[1]Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,[2]
And measured heaven with a span,
Or enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure,
And weighed the mountains in scales,
And the hills in a balance?

Who hath directed the spirit of Jehovah,
Or as his counsellor hath taught him?
With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him,
And taught him in the path of justice,
And shewed him the way of understanding?

Behold! the nations are as a drop from a bucket,
And are accounted as small dust on the balance:
Behold! he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.
And Lebanon is not sufficient for fuel,
Nor the beasts thereof for a burnt offering.[3]
All the nations are as nothing before him;
They are accounted by him less than nothing, and vanity.

To whom then will ye liken God?[4]
Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?
The image, a workman hath cast it,
And the goldsmith layeth it over with gold,
Each helpeth his neighbour;
And saith to his brother, "Be of good courage."

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[1] Isa. 40:12–19; 41:6, 7; 40:20–31.

[2] In order to appreciate the wonderful lines which follow one must picture with the prophet, Jehovah in the act of creating the earth, with scales and measure weighing and balancing mountains and valleys. The stupendous character of this thought of God as the creator of the universe had but just begun to take full hold upon the imagination of both prophet and people.

[3] For such a God the forests of Mount Lebanon would not contribute a sufficient number of beasts nor a large enough quantity of fuel for an adequate sacrifice.

[4] We must consider that the prophet was addressing a people surrounded on every hand by idols. Upon these idols the Babylonians were constantly calling, and upon

So the craftsmen encourageth the goldsmith,
And he that smootheth with the hammer him that smiteth the anvil,
Saying of the plating, "It is good";
And he fasteneth it securely with nails.
He that is too poor for this
Chooseth a tree that will not rot;
He seeketh him a skilful workman
To set up a graven image, that shall not totter.

Do ye not know? Do you not hear?
Hath it not been told you from the beginning?
Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?
It is Jehovah that sitteth above the circle of the earth,
And the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;
That stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain,
And spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.

It is he that bringeth princes to nothing;
He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.
Scarcely have they been planted; scarcely have they been sown;
Scarcely hath their stock[1] taken root in the earth:
When he bloweth upon them, and they wither,
And a whirlwind carrieth them away like stubble.

To whom then will ye liken me,
That he should be equal? saith the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high,
And see who hath created these.[2]
He bringeth out their host by number;
He calleth them all by name;
In the greatness of his might and his power
Not one is missing.

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them they were depending for food and drink, for temporal and spiritual prosperity, and for the preservation of the nation of Babylonia at home, as well as for success in wars abroad. Who can tell how many Hebrews who would not have bowed themselves down to these images had a borrowed confidence in them, or at least regarded them with superstitious awe? It was necessary that the prophet should destroy in them all faith in idols if he would create a sufficient faith in Jehovah to lead them to return to their own land.

[1] *The stock:* using the figure of a plant with its main stalk.

[2] *These:* the stars and the moon.

Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel,
"My way is hid from the Lord,
And my right is passed away from my God"?
Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard?
Jehovah the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth,
Fainteth not, neither is weary;
There is no searching of his understanding.
He giveth power to the faint;
And to him that hath no might he increaseth strength.

Even the youths may faint and be weary,
And the young men utterly fall:
But they that trust in Jehovah renew their strength;
They shall mount up on wings like eagles;
They shall run, and not be weary;
They shall walk, and not faint.[1]

The Coming of Cyrus the Triumph of Prophecy

Has not Jehovah raised up Cyrus as his own emissary, giving nations to him as stubble? Was not this all planned by Jehovah from the beginning? This was the conclusion of the prophet.

[2]Keep silence before me, O islands;[3]
Let the people come near; then let them speak:
Let us come near together to judgment.
Who hath raised up one from the east,
Calling him in righteousness to his foot;
Giving the nations before him,
And making him rule over kings?
He giveth them as the dust to his sword,
As the driven stubble to his bow.

Who hath wrought and done it,
Calling the generations from the beginning?
I, Jehovah, the first,
And with those yet to come, I am he.
The isles saw, and feared;
The ends of the earth trembled; they drew near, and came.

[1] *Summary:* O Israel, your God, Jehovah, the creator of the earth is *incomparable.* He is the source of all power. He will strengthen you and carry you over all obstacles. Trust yourselves to him.

[2] Isa. 41:1–5.

[3] Representing far countries.

The prophet calls upon the idols of Babylon to bear some testimony to their own power, to do *anything* which will prove their intelligence. At the same time he declares that it is Jehovah the God of the Hebrews who has raised up Cyrus, this new conqueror, for the very purpose of releasing his people from their bondage.

[1]Produce your champion, saith Jehovah;
Bring forth your idols, saith the King of Jacob.
Let them come near and declare unto us what shall happen:
Declare ye things past, what was their cause
That we may consider them, and know the issue of them;
Or declare the things that are to come hereafter,
That we may know that ye are gods:
Yea, do good, or do evil,
That we may both see it and be dismayed.
Behold, ye are of nothing,
And your work is nought:
An abomination is he that chooseth you.[2]

I have raised up one from the north, and he is come;
From the rising of the sun one that calleth upon my name:
And he shall trample upon rulers as upon mortar,
And as the potter treadeth clay.

Who hath declared it from the beginning, that we might know?
And aforetime, that we might say, "He is right"?
Yea, there was none that declared it, none that announced it,
Yea, there was none that heard your words.

I am the first to say unto Zion, "Behold, behold them":
And to give to Jerusalem good tidings.
And when I look there is no one;
Among the idols no counsellor,
That, when I ask of them, can answer a word.
Behold, all of their works are vanity and nought.
Their molten images are wind and emptiness.

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[1] Isa. 41: 21–24, 25–29.

[2] The idols which have been summoned to exhibit their power make no response. The inference is that they are unable to do so, and the prophet heaps upon them his scorn. They cannot justify the claims of their worshipers.

Add to this the following stanzas, and note that at last we have the clear belief that there is but one only God, omnipotent over all the world, that is, by his ability to predict the future and to bring to pass his predictions Jehovah has established in the mind of the prophet his identity as the one God of the world and of human history.

[1]Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel,
And his redeemer Jehovah of hosts:
I am the first, and I am the last:
And besides me there is no God.

And who, as I, could proclaim,[2]
Could declare it, and set it in order before me,
The things that are coming, announcing,
And that which shall come to pass, declaring.

Fear ye not, neither be afraid:
Have I not declared unto thee of old? ye are my witnesses.
Is there a God besides me?
Yea, there is no Rock, not any.

The Senseless Makers of Idols

Still more effective for the prophet's purpose is the following description of the idol-makers, whose trade was probably greatly increased by the misfortunes of Babylon and the consequent necessity of appeals to the gods. Can we appreciate the audacity of this arraignment in a land teeming with idols?

[3]They that fashion images are all of them vanity;[4]
And the things that they delight in are worthless.

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[1] Isa. 44:6–8.

[2] "Jehovah alone has through his prophets predicted the coming of a deliverer for his people, and the overthrow of the great nations. The fate of Babylon is about to illustrate the truth of the prophet's message. Jehovah had planned all from the beginning. All things are in his hands and the idols are nothing."

[3] Isa. 44:9–19.

[4] The description of the process by which men made for themselves gods of metal and of wood and stone is full of the keenest sarcasm. A comparison of this with the prophet's glowing descriptions of Jehovah's character and attributes helps us to see the full force of his argument.

Their own witnesses see not,
Nor know that they are put to shame.
Who hath fashioned a god,
Or molten an image that is nothing?
Behold, all his worshipers shall be ashamed;
And the workmen, they are but men.[1]
Let them[2] all be gathered together, let them stand up;[3]
They shall fear, they shall be ashamed together.

The smith prepareth it in the coals,
He fashioneth it with hammers,
And worketh it with his strong arm:
Yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth;
He drinketh no water, and is faint.

The carpenter stretcheth out a line;
He marketh it out with a pencil;
He shapeth it with scraping tools, and with the compasses,
He shapeth it after the figure of a man,
Like the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house.

One heweth down cedars,
And chooseth the holm tree and the oak,
And strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest:
He planteth a fir tree, and the rain doth nourish it.
Then it is used by a man to burn:
He taketh from it, and warmeth himself;
Yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread:
Yea, he maketh a god, and worshipeth it;
He maketh it into an image, and falleth down thereto.

He burneth part of it in the fire;
With part thereof he roasteth flesh;
He eateth the roast, and is satisfied:
Yea, he warmeth himself, and saith,
"Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire":

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[1] *Men:* that is, mere men, not gods.

[2] *Them:* the idols.

[3] *Stand up:* to justify themselves.

With the rest of it he maketh a god,
He worships his image: he falleth down unto it,
He prayeth unto it, and saith,
"Deliver me; for thou art my god."

They know not, neither do they consider:
For their eyes are shut, that they cannot see;
And their hearts, that they cannot understand.
And none taketh thought,
Neither is there knowledge nor understanding to ask,
"I have burned part of it in the fire;
Yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof;
I have roasted flesh and eaten it:
And shall I make from the rest of it an abomination?
Shall I fall down to a block of wood?"[1]

Jehovah Hath Redeemed Israel

Isaiah's messages of hope contain no contradiction of the statements of Ezekiel and of Jeremiah that the misfortunes of the people were a judgment for past sins, but he regards that punishment as now complete. Indeed it is a new generation to whom he speaks for it is about fifty years since the surrender of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. Those of the younger generation who had kept themselves free from idolatry were in exile, not because of their own sin, but as a result of that of their fathers.

[2]Who gave Jacob for a spoil,
And Israel to the robbers?
Did not Jehovah? he against whom we have sinned,
And in whose ways we would not walk,
Neither were we obedient unto his law.

Therefore he poured upon him the fierceness of his anger,
And the strength of battle;
It set him on fire round about, yet he comprehended not;[3]
It burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

---

[1] "The people who worship the idols are too stupid to see that they are worshiping mere blocks of wood," is the statement of the prophet.

[2] Isa. 42:24–25; 43:1–7; 44:21–23.

[3] *Comprehended not:* that is, that it was Jehovah who was chastening and disciplining him.

But now thus saith Jehovah that created thee, O Jacob,
And he that formed thee, O Israel:
Fear not, for I have redeemed thee;
I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee:
Through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:
When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned;
Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

For I am Jehovah thy God,
The Holy One of Israel, thy saviour:
I have given Egypt as thy ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba for thee.[1]

Because thou hast been precious in my sight,
Honored and beloved by me;
Therefore will I give men for thee,
And peoples for the sake of thy life.

Fear not; for I am with thee:
I will bring thy children from the east,
And gather thee from the west;
I will say to the north, "Give up";
And to the south, "Withhold not;

"Bring my sons from far,
And my daughters from the end of the earth;
Every one who is called by my name,
And whom I have created for my glory."[2]

Remember these things, O Jacob;
Yea Israel, for thou art my servant:
I have formed thee; thou art my servant:
O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.
I have blotted out, as with a mist, thy transgressions,
And, with a cloud, thy sins:
Return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

[1] The prophet sees that Cyrus will be the conqueror of Egypt and Ethiopia (Seba was possibly a section of Ethiopia), and considers that all these nations are to be conquered in order that Israel may be allowed to build up her kingdom of peace in Palestine.

[2] From all places where the Hebrews have been carried as captives of war or scattered by ill-fortune they shall be recalled by Jehovah, said the prophet.

Sing, O ye heavens, for Jehovah hath done it;
Shout, ye depths of the earth;
Break forth into singing, ye mountains,
O forest, and every tree therein:
For Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob,
And hath glorified himself in Israel.

Cyrus the Long Expected Liberator

At last, in October, 538 B.C., Cyrus turned toward Babylon. His conquest was easy. Dissatisfaction within the city lent sympathetic victory to the battles fought on the northern borders of Babylonia, and the army of Cyrus entered the city practically without resistance. The king was banished and Cyrus made his triumphal entry before the end of the month. His spirit was inspiring and wholly constructive, rebuilding fortifications and temples, and restoring law and order to the demoralized provinces.

Whether the following poem was circulated before or after the coming of Cyrus we do not know, but it expresses emphatically the well-founded hopes of the Hebrews.

[1]Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden,
To subdue nations before him,
Loosing the loins of kings;
To open doors before him,
That gates may not be shut;

"I will go before thee,
And make the rugged places plain:
I will break in pieces the doors of brass,
And cut in sunder the bars of iron:[2]
And I will give thee the treasures of darkness,[3]
And hidden riches of secret places,
That thou mayest know that it is I, Jehovah,
Who calleth thee by thy name, even the God of Israel.

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[1] Isa. 45:1–7, 12–15.

[2] That is, "It is I, Jehovah, who have called Cyrus, and have opened all doors before him."

[3] *Treasures of darkness:* the wealth hidden away in remote corners.

For Jacob my servant's sake,
And Israel my chosen,
I have called thee by thy name:
I have surnamed thee,[1] though thou hast not known me.
I am Jehovah, and there is none else;
Besides me there is no God:

"I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me:
That they may know from the east and from the west,
That there is none beside me:
I am Jehovah, and there is none else.
I form the light, and create darkness;
I make good fortune, and create disaster;
I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things."

I have made the earth,
And created man upon it:
I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens,
And all their host have I commanded.
It is I that hath raised him up in righteousness,
And made straight all his ways;
He shall build my city,
And he shall let my exiles go free,
Not for price and not for reward,
Saith Jehovah of hosts.

Go Ye Forth from Babylon

The policy of Cyrus was that of clemency, generosity, and general religious toleration. He worshiped all gods and found favor with all peoples whom he made his subjects. It is understood that he extended to the exiles within his domains the privilege of return to their native land, and even that they were allowed to take with them the wealth of their cities which had been the plunder of their conquerors.

And thus the way was at last opened for the long-looked-for return of the Hebrews. But the way was long and the journey arduous. The city of Jerusalem, never uninhabited, had possibly

[1] *Surnamed:* given a title of honor. Recall that Jacob was made Israel, Abram was renamed Abraham, each because of some special relation to himself which Jehovah established.

been somewhat restored and contained a small but poor and struggling population. Not even the Hebrew prophets could promise that houses and temples would be miraculously built, that old relations of business and social life could immediately be restored. Was not Babylonia under the glories of the coming reign of Cyrus a more promising home than the city of Jerusalem?

Great need was there for the preaching of a prophet who believed that Jehovah would re-establish the center of his kingdom in Jerusalem.

[1]Hearken unto me, O Jacob,
And Israel whom I have called:
I am he; who am the first,
I also am the last.
Yea, mine hand hath laid the foundation of the earth,
And my right hand hath spread out the heavens:
When I call unto them,[2]
They stand forth together.

Assemble yourselves, all ye, and hear;
Which among them hath foretold these things?
He whom Jehovah hath loved shall perform his pleasure on Babylon,
And his arm shall be on the Chaldeans.
I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him:
I have brought him, and made his way prosperous.
Come ye near unto me, hear ye this;
From the beginning I have not spoken in secret;
From the time that it was, there am I.

Thus saith Jehovah, thy redeemer,
The Holy One of Israel:
I am Jehovah God,
Which teacheth thee to profit,
Which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.
Oh, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!
Then had thy peace been as a river,
And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea;
Thy children also had been as the sand,
And thy descendants like the grains thereof:
His name should not be cut off,
Nor destroyed from before me.

[1] Isa. 48:12–21.

[2] *Them:* the heavenly bodies.

Go ye forth of Babylon,
Flee ye from the Chaldeans;
With a voice of singing declare ye, tell this,
Utter it even to the end of the earth:
Say ye, "The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob.
And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts:
He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them:
He clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out."[1]

If the people responded, "Jehovah hath forsaken his city, and hath forgotten us," quickly came the prophet's reply, couched in words of supreme tenderness:

[2]Can a woman forget her babe,
That she should not have compassion on her own child?
Yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee.
Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;
Thy walls are continually before me.

Did the faithful count themselves too few in numbers for the adventure into unknown difficulties? For we must believe that not all the younger generation had remained free from the influences of Babylonian idolatry, and many of the former generation had abandoned the worship of Jehovah. The prophet is ready with his answer, a promise of gathering multitudes:

[3]Thy children make haste;
Thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.
Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold:
All these gather themselves together and come to thee.
As I live, saith Jehovah,
Thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament,
And gird thyself with them, like a bride.
For, as for thy waste and thy desolate places
And thy land that hath been destroyed,
Surely now shalt thou be too small for thine inhabitants,
And they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.

[1] The song contained in the last four lines may have been already a familiar "campaign song" which had been used by the prophet in his efforts to inspire the people, many times before.

[2] Isa. 49:15, 16.

[3] Isa. 49:17–23.

The children of which thou hast been bereft
Shall yet say in thine ears,
The place is too small for me;
Give room to me that I may dwell.
Then shalt thou say in thine heart,
Who hath borne me these,
Seeing I was bereaved of my children, and was solitary,
An exile, and wandering to and fro?
And who hath brought up these?
Behold, I was left alone;
These, where were they?

Thus saith Jehovah:
Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the nations,
And set up my signal to the peoples:
And they shall bring thy sons in their bosom,
And thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.
And kings shall be thy foster fathers,
And their queens thy nursing mothers:
They shall bow down to thee with their faces to the earth,
And lick the dust of thy feet;
And thou shalt know that I am Jehovah,
And they that trust in me shall not be put to shame.

Again he cites the events of their own history—Abraham who was but one and became many, and the great deliverance at the Red Sea—all in order that he may give to the halting and fear-filled people courage to make a start.

[1]Hearken to me, ye that long for righteousness,
Ye that seek Jehovah:
Consider the rock whence ye were hewn,
And the pit whence ye were quarried.
Look unto Abraham your father,
And unto Sarah that bare you:
For when he was but one I called him,
And I blessed him, and made him many.[2]

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[1] Isa. 51:1–16.

[2] The prophet argues that what Jehovah has done before in making a nation from small beginnings he can and will do again.

So the Lord hath comforted Zion:
He hath considered all her ruins,
He will make her wilderness like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of Jehovah;
Joy and gladness shall be found therein,
Thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Hearken unto me, O my people;
And give ear unto me, O my nation;
For a law shall go forth from me,
And I will make my teaching for a light of the peoples.
My righteousness is near,
My salvation is gone forth,
And mine arms shall rule the peoples;
Even the coast lands wait for me,[1]

Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
And look upon the earth beneath;
For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke,
And the earth shall wear out like a garment.
And they that dwell therein shall die in like manner:
But my salvation shall be for ever,
And my righteousness will not fail.

Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness,
The people in whose heart is my law;
Fear ye not the reproach of men
Neither be ye dismayed at their revilings.
For the moth shall consume them like a garment,
And the worm shall eat them as wool:
But my righteousness shall be for ever,
And my salvation unto all generations.

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Jehovah;[2]
Awake, as in the days of old, the generations of ancient times.
Was it not thou that cut Rahab[3] in pieces,
That pierced the dragon?

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[1] Note that not alone of Israel is Jehovah the direct ruler, but in the prophet's thought, the remotest lands are to recognize gladly his authority.

[2] Jehovah exhorts his own arm of power to fulfil the promise of the past history of the nation, and to complete the work of redemption commenced so long ago.

[3] *A name applied to Egypt.

Was it not thou which dried up the sea,
The waters of the great deep;
That made the depths of the sea a way
For the redeemed to pass over?

And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return,
And come with singing unto Zion;
And everlasting joy shall be upon their heads:
They shall obtain gladness and joy,
And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
It is I, even I, that comforteth you:
Who art thou, that thou art afraid of man that shall die,
And of the son of man which shall be made as grass?
Hast thou forgotten Jehovah thy Maker, that stretched
forth the heavens,
And laid the foundations of the earth,
That thou fearest continually all the day
Because of the fury of the oppressor?
When he maketh ready to destroy,
Where is the fury of the oppressor?
The captive exile shall speedily be loosed;
And he shall not die and go down into Sheol,
Neither shall his bread fail.[1]

For I am Jehovah thy God,
Which stirreth up the sea, that the waves thereof roar:
Jehovah of hosts is his name.
I have put my words in thy mouth,
And have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand,
Stretching out the heavens, and laying the foundations of
the earth,
And saying unto Zion, "Thou art my people."

Awake, Awake, O Zion

Awake, awake! is the ever-recurring cry. Arouse yourselves! All that you have dreamed and more is before you. Jehovah awaits only your acceptance of joy and peace.

[2]Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion;
Put on thy beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city;

[1] This stanza reflects strongly the doubt and discouragement of the people and the difficulties against which the prophet was struggling.

[2] Isa. 52:1–12.

For henceforth there shall no more come into thee
The alien and the unclean.
Shake thyself from the dust; arise, O Jerusalem:
Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck,[1] O captive daughter of Zion.

How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,
That publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of deliverance,
That publisheth salvation;
That saith to Zion, "Thy God reigneth"!
Hark, thy watchmen! they lift up the voice,
Together do they sing;
For they see, eye to eye,
Jehovah returning to Zion.

Break forth into joy, sing together,
Ye ruins of Jerusalem:
For Jehovah hath comforted his people,
He hath redeemed Jerusalem.
Jehovah hath made bare his holy arm[2]
In the eyes of all nations:
And all the ends of the earth shall see
The deliverance of our God.

Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out thence,
Touch no unclean thing;
Go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean,
Ye that bear the vessels[3] of Jehovah.
For ye shall not go out in haste,
Neither shall ye go by flight:
For Jehovah will go before you;
And the God of Israel will be your rearward.

The Purpose of Israel's Suffering

But not alone for her own joy was Israel now to be redeemed. Not alone for her own sake had she been suffering in Babylonia. To Isaiah of the captivity had come a vision of a world mission

[1] Throw off thy captivity.

[2] In the exhibition of his power in preparing for the redemption of his people.

[3] *Vessels of Jehovah:* Temple furnishings.

for the faithful remnant of the people, the "servant of Jehovah" who should teach not alone the Hebrews, but all the nations, not only of the authority of the one true God, but of his character and his wondrous dealings with his chosen people.

[1]Listen, O isles, unto me;
And hearken, ye peoples, from far:
The LORD hath called me from the birth;
From the beginning hath he made mention of my name.

And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword,
In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me;
And he hath made me a polished shaft,
In his quiver hath he kept me close:
And he said unto me, "Thou art my servant;
Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

But I said, "I have laboured in vain,
I have spent my strength for nought and vanity.
Yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah,
And my recompense with my God."

And now saith Jehovah
That formed me from my birth to be his servant,
To bring Jacob again to him,
And that Israel be gathered unto him:
(For I am honourable in the eyes of Jehovah,
And my God is become my strength:)

Yea, he saith, "It is too small a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the *tribes of Jacob*,
And to restore the preserved of *Israel:*
I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles,
That thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

The Mission of the Servant

[2]Behold, my servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen, in whom my soul delighteth:
I have put my spirit upon him;
He shall bring forth righteousness to the Gentiles.

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[1] Isa. 49:1–6. Isa. 42:1–7.

He shall not lift up a cry
Nor let his voice be heard in the street.
A bruised reed shall he not break,
And the dimly burning wick shall he not quench:

He shall bring forth teaching in truth.
He shall not fail nor be discouraged,
Till he have set his law in the earth;
And the isles shall wait for his word.

Thus saith the one God, Jehovah,
He that created the heavens, and stretched them forth;
He that spread abroad the earth and that which it beareth;
He that giveth breath unto the people upon it,
And spirit to them that walk upon it:

"I Jehovah have called thee in righteousness,
I will hold thy hand, and will keep thee,
And I will give thee for a covenant of the people,
For a light to the Gentiles;
To open the eyes that are blind,
To bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
Those that sit in darkness out of the prison house."[1]

The Humiliation and the Exaltation of Jehovah's Servant

The prophet mentally surveys the history of the group of the faithful who had entered Babylon a half-century before. He recalls the revilings and scorn which they received from their fellow captives who had turned to the Babylonian gods, and further that nearly all of these faithful ones had passed away in ignorance of the great light which they were destined to bring to the world. He recalls too how the whole nation had stood before the world as a despised and broken people, forsaken of their God, and how Jehovah himself had been held in derision by scornful nations. The prophet has been trying to convince his fellow-exiles that God was omnipotent, that he was loving toward Israel,

[1] Note that in this passage the prophet does not say that the Gentiles shall receive teaching from Jehovah directly or through their own great thinkers, but only through the Hebrews. It was yet too much for the prophet to conceive that Jehovah could have a similar relation to all men of whatever race.

and that he would speedily restore them to their old home. But in order to persuade them to belief in his message he is under the necessity of finding a satisfactory explanation of the sufferings they have been forced to undergo. If God was all-powerful and all-loving as the prophet had said, why did he permit Israel to be so cruelly oppressed? The answer to that question is given in the message concerning "the suffering servant." A new interpretation of all this tragedy has come to the prophet and when he recounts these sad events to his hearers, he places in striking contrast with them the great destiny of the people and the exalted position which they shall occupy among the nations in the future. Suffering was necessary to the bringing-forth of the new and deeper knowledge, and the light that was to fill the world with glory. Only through this suffering could they have learned to know the true character of the God who had been teaching them, the one true God, who would bring all men as worshipers to his feet. The picture is so clear to the mind of the prophet that he seems almost to be talking of a person, and some people have even thought that he was describing the sufferings of Jeremiah. But as we reflect further we see that he is giving voice to a great fact and principle that spiritual knowledge has come and will continue to come to the world through the suffering of nations and individuals, but that through their sufferings they are exalted.

[1]Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted,[2]
He shall be lifted up, and shall be very high.
Like as many were astonished at him,
So shall he startle many nations;
Kings shall shut their mouths before him:
For that which had not been told them shall they see;
And that which they had not heard shall they understand.

[1] Isa. 52:13—53:13.

[2] The student should not be surprised if he finds the following selection difficult. A frequent reading of it will impress its beauty and power. The message of the mission of suffering is one which does not come to youth, as to more mature years, yet even the young have frequently seen illustrations of suffering cheerfully and faithfully borne in order that another might be made better or happier. Even in the pro-

Who hath believed our report?
And to whom hath the arm of the LORD been revealed?
For he grew up before us as a sickly plant,
And as a root out of dry ground:
He hath no form that we should regard him;
And no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised, and forsaken of men;
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
And as one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs,
And carried our sorrows:
Yet we did esteem him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities:
The chastisement of our peace was upon him;
And with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep had gone astray;
We had turned every one to his way;
And Jehovah laid upon him
The guilt of us all.

He was afflicted, yet he humbled himself.
As a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
And as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb;
So he opened not his mouth.

By oppressive judgment he was taken away;
And of his generation, who considered
That he was cut off out of the land of the living,
For the transgression of my people had been stricken?

And they made his grave with the wicked,
And with the evildoers his burial place;
Although he had done no violence,
Neither was any deceit in his mouth.

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cesses of nature, we see that out of darkness and pain frequently come life and joy. So bitter experiences are frequently the forerunners of wisdom and happiness. The principle which the prophet has here so beautifully portrayed as characteristic of the servant of Jehovah, by whom he meant faithful Israel, has been exhibited in many of the lives of later servants of Jehovah, and is universal in character.

Yet it seemed good to Jehovah to bruise him;
To make of his soul an offering for sin,
He shall see his posterity, he shall prolong his days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall be manifest in his hand.
He shall see out of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.

By his knowledge shall my servant make many righteous
And he shall bear their iniquities.
Therefore will I give him a portion with the great,
And he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
Because he poured out his soul unto death,
And was numbered with the transgressors:
Bearing the sin of many,
And making intercession for the transgressors.

Come Ye to Jehovah

So the lesson was set forth. The righteous, beloved of God, may learn, through suffering, truth which shall bless not only themselves but all mankind, and by this path Jehovah has revealed himself to the world. To all quarters went out the call from the prophet, "We *know* our God whereof we speak. Come to him."

[1]Ho, every one that thirsteth,[2] come ye to the waters,
And he that hath no money come,
Buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?
And your labour for that which satisfieth not?

Hearken diligently unto me, that ye may eat that which is good,
And let your soul delight itself in fatness.
Incline your ear, and come unto me;
Hear, and your soul shall live:
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
As the sure promises to David.

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[1] Isa. 55:1–13.

[2] *Thirsteth:* for hope and satisfaction.

Even as I gave him for a witness[1] to the peoples,
A leader and commander to the peoples,
Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not,[2]
And a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee,
Because of[3] Jehovah thy God,
And for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found,
Call ye upon him while he is near:
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts:
And let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him;
And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are my ways higher than your ways,
And my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven,
And returneth not thither, but watereth the earth,
And maketh it bring forth and bud,
And giveth seed to the sower, and bread to the eater;
So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth:
It shall not return unto me empty,
But it shall accomplish that which I please,
And it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.[4]

For ye shall go out with joy,
And be led forth with peace:
The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing,
And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree,
And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree:
And it shall be to Jehovah for a name,
For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

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[1] *Witness:* a witness to Jehovah's power and favor.

[2] That is, a *foreign* nation.

[3] *Because of:* hearing of Jehovah and his wonderful deliverance of his people.

[4] What I promise shall be accomplished.

Have we in Isaiah of Babylonia reached the highest point of prophecy? There is one step still higher, and for its development we must wait another century and more. At this moment we have but to reflect that out of this period of spiritual darkness and apparent desertion, isolated in the midst of a populous land, and surrounded by the allurements of idolatry, the people came into a clear vision of Jehovah as the *one* God, creator of the universe, ruler of all nations, the moving force in human history. With this vision came also to Israel the consciousness of having been chosen by Jehovah not for her own sake but for the accomplishment of a divine purpose—to reveal the true God to all the world. Surely is was a great thing to be the first to give this interpretation of God to the world.[1]

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[1] We should do well to consider the courage and vision of the prophet who amid the darkest hours of the captivity and the lack of enthusiasm on the part of his people only sang the louder of the joys which were to come. This is the sort of faith and courage which is needed by any man or woman who would arouse people to a great movement of any sort, for it was a political movement which Isaiah was championing.

CHAPTER XIV

PROPHETIC MESSAGES IN THE NEW CITY

As we recall the inspiring predictions of the two prophets whose work was recorded in the immediately preceding pages, we feel that the only fitting theme for the present chapter would be the story of a glorious return to Jerusalem, and the restoration of the city, as so vividly depicted by the prophets, but ours is not so acceptable a task.

It would naturally be expected that the literature through which the later history of Israel could be traced would be more systematic and accessible than the sources from which we gather the history of earlier years, but such is not the case. The events of the period from the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 538 B.C. until about 520 B.C. are recorded only in the Book of Ezra and the record seems quite clearly to be made up at a much later time with scattered and undated documents as a basis. The editor like ourselves was obliged to depend upon his imagination to fill in the gap.[1] We know that Cyrus reigned but nine years. He died in 529 B.C. and was succeeded by his son Cambyses who within four years completed the conquest of Egypt. Three years later Cambyses committed suicide anticipating difficulty with an impostor, Gaumata, who had rallied discontented vassal states to his support during the absence of the king on his Egyptian campaigns. The usurper was in turn dethroned by Darius, who led a conspiracy of the nobles and claimed to be a descendant of the royal family from which Cyrus had come. In 519 B.C. Darius became master of the situation and established

[1] The books of Ezra and Nehemiah give us a story of events in Jerusalem commencing with a decree of Cyrus, said to have come from the first year of the reign of that king, and continuing for about 100 years. A careful study of these accounts with an effort to adjust the events to the established names and dates of Persian history results in confusion. This, with the further fact that the prophets whose writings come from a period not far removed from this make no allusion to so important an event as the decree of Cyrus, or the simultaneous return of so large and important a company of people, leads us to conclude that the account was much later than the events, and is highly colored by the author, who had little reliable data upon which to base his work, but concluded that the predictions of the prophets must have been fulfilled in this systematic and imposing way.

himself firmly upon the throne of the Persian empire, having subdued Babylon and other provinces which had taken advantage of the civil war in the Persian empire to revolt from its authority.

Did the Hebrews in Babylon accept the opportunity which the policy of Cyrus gave for a general return to Palestine? Did Isaiah of Babylon succeed in inspiring a large number of his fellow-countrymen with courage to exchange the familiar walls of Babylon for the fields and ruins of the city of their fathers? We do not know. We must conclude that in the sixty-six years since the fall of Jerusalem people had been gathering about the site of the city, in some measure rendering it habitable. Many would naturally drift in from the open country with its ruined villages as well as from Egypt and from other localities where they had fled for refuge during the long siege. We recall that the little colony of which Jeremiah was a member was last seen in Egypt. But no country once civilized is easily quite depopulated, and the site of Jerusalem was still the most favorable in Palestine for defense and for commercial life. Doubtless therefore a considerable population had accumulated before Cyrus came to the throne of Babylonia. But the character of this miscellaneous population must have been much below that of the party of the faithful in captivity, who, originally of the best blood, had, in a compact body, lived and suffered together; who had, inspired by the intellectual and literary influences by which they were surrounded, made a careful study of the nation's history, rewriting large portions of it and creating a national literature. These exiled Hebrews had also never been without a great prophet to keep alive in them the religion of Jehovah and to carry them on to higher and higher conceptions of his character.

That some of the Babylonian Hebrews did return we are sure, since we find reported as governor of the province of Judah, Zerubbabel, one of the royal house, probably a grandson of Jehoiachin the captive king, who traced his descent from David. (We recall that all the royal house were carried into captivity.) His honor and authority were shared by Joshua the high priest.[1] In

[1] The new community seems to have made no attempt to establish itself upon a political basis of equality with its neighbors. Its life was no longer that of a nation, but of a community whose bond of unity was that of religion. We find little evidence

RELIEF MAP OF PALESTINE

Based upon the Palestine Exploration Funds Map, by George Armstrong.

The Jewish community in Palestine included within black lines.

all probability a company of enthusiasts were stirred by exilic prophets to return, and others followed from time to time. The stories in the Book of Ezra indicate that an attempt was early made to rebuild the temple, but after the foundations had been laid the work was interrupted and finally stopped by the interference of Samaritan neighbors on the north.

If we knew how large a body of Babylonian Hebrews had drifted back to Palestine, or had come in expeditions for the restoration of the city, we should know better from what source came the inspiration for the revival of interest in the temple and its worship which was the theme of the preaching of two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, about 520 B.C. Perhaps they saw in the succession of disasters[1] which Babylon was passing through a possibility of large numbers of Hebrews returning to Jerusalem. Possibly they felt that the rebuilding of the Temple and the re-establishment of an elaborate ritual of worship would be a signal for a general rallying of the Hebrews, scattered in many lands, and the beginning of that ideal kingdom which had been in the mind of the prophets for generations.

That the self-appointed task of these prophets was not easy and that their words fell upon many unheeding ears we can easily gather from their sermons. The community had suffered from poverty induced by poor crops, the result of drought and bad management. The land had been neglected too long to respond readily to cultivation. Haggai the prophet, however, voiced the feeling of a considerable party when he announced that their ill fortune was the result of Jehovah's displeasure because his house was still lying in ruins. His exhortation to the people follows:

> [2]In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month,[3]
> in the first day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by

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in the writings of this period that idolatry existed in the community which was now almost wholly united in the worship of Jehovah. The chief religious officer, the high priest, was therefore the most important man in the community and shared the honors and authority more than equally with the civil head, the governor appointed by the Persian king.

[1] See p. 215.

[2] Hag. 1:1–11.

[3] *Sixth month:* i.e., September. The Hebrew calendar year began in our spring month of April.

Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, This people say, The time has not yet come to build Jehovah's house." Then came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this temple lieth in ruins?" Now therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts: "Consider. Ye sow much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled; ye clothe yourselves, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages putteth his wages into a bag with holes."[1]

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: "Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the temple; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith Jehovah. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it.[2] Why? saith Jehovah of hosts. Because of my temple that lieth in ruins, while ye run every man to his own house. Therefore because of you the heavens withhold the dew, and the earth withholdeth its fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the grain, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands."

With what tact the prophet encouraged the people, who saw in the simple structure which the little community was able to build no suggestion of the glories of the former temple, and who lost heart and feared lest the new temple would not be acceptable to Jehovah, we shall see.

[3]Who is there among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work: for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts, according to the word that I cove-

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[1] "Ye work hard, but get poor results, and your money is wasted because it does not bring good returns for your investment."

[2] *I did blow upon it:* to destroy it, indicating dissatisfaction with the people.

[3] Hag. 2:3–9 (Am. Standard Rev. Ver., by permission).

nanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit abode among you: fear ye not. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: "In a little while, I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations;[1] and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former," saith Jehovah of hosts; "and in this place will I give peace," saith Jehovah of hosts.

The words of Haggai were reinforced by those of Zechariah, another prophet of this period. He encouraged the prince Zerubbabel to believe that the work upon the temple, although progressing slowly and fitfully, delayed by bad seasons and fluctuating interest, would certainly be completed in his lifetime.

[2]This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the top stone[3] with shoutings of Grace, grace, unto it." Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice and shall see the plummet[4] in the hand of Zerubbabel."

The old walls of the city, broken down and in many places completely destroyed, afforded no protection to the citizens from the depredations of wild beasts, robbers, and the malicious attacks of jealous neighbors. The prophet saw no immediate prospect of the restoration of the walls, but he courageously pictured the wall

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[1] *Shake all nations:* This seemed to be a literal description of what was passing in the world about the Hebrews. The Babylonians, Susanians, and Medes all revolted from the Persian empire at the death of Cambyses. It remained to be seen whether Darius could permanently hold such rebellion in check. A general breaking-up of the world powers threatened.

[2] Zech. 4:6*b*–10.

[3] *Topstone:* the last finishing touch.

[4] *The plummet:* by which the wall shall be tested to see if it is straight and perfect.

of fire with which Jehovah would surround the city, and naïvely explains that the inhabitants will be so numerous that walls will be impracticable.

[1]And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, "Whither goest thou?" And he said unto me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof." And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, "Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, by reason of the multitude of men and cattle therein. But I," saith Jehovah, "will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her."

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion;[2] for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee," saith Jehovah. And many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and shall be his people; and he will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And Jehovah shall inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and shall yet choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all flesh, before Jehovah; for he is waked up out of his holy habitation.

That Jehovah should dwell in his city was the fundamental condition of prosperity in the estimation of every devout Hebrew. To some, it is true, there had come the conception of Jehovah as a world power, but to all the center of his activities was ever to be the little country of Palestine. Notwithstanding the assurances of the prophets, Jehovah seemed not yet to have come with his presence and the fulfilment of his promise of prosperity. Gradually there grew up the feeling that the delay was due to the fact that the people were not sufficiently righteous. Had not Jehovah always given evidence of his displeasure by misfortune when the people had sinned? So argues Zechariah.

[3]Thus saith Jehovah: "I have returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called The city of truth; and the mountain of Jehovah of hosts, The

[1] Zech. 2:1–5, 10–13.

[2] *Daughter of Zion:* a favorite poetic designation for Jerusalem.

[3] Selected from Zech., chap. 8.

holy mountain." Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: "Old men and old women shall yet dwell in the broad places of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."[1] Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: "Because it seemeth marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes?" Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: "Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness."

For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: "These are the things that ye shall do: Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbor: execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates; and let none of you devise evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate."

And the word of Jehovah of hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: "The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love truth and peace."[2] Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: peoples and the inhabitants of many cities shall come; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to entreat the favor of Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: "In those days ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, they shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

But we learn from Ezra's memoirs that the temple was finally completed and dedicated in 516 B.C. The ceremonies were as elaborate and the sacrifices as plentiful as the people could provide.[3]

[1] The presence upon the streets of men and women of all ages and of young children in happy play would indicate a long period of peace and prosperity when family life went on uninterruptedly.

[2] The fasts with which the people were wont to express their penitence and their lamentations over Jerusalem are to become occasions of rejoicing because of the blessings which Jehovah will bring.

[3] Ezra 6:16–18.

Then follows a period of seventy years of silence in the records,[1] but we can imagine the community slowly growing. Its very insignificance was its protection in the midst of the wars raging about it. The Persians swept onward into Europe and were defeated by the Greeks at Marathon. Rebellion in Egypt brought Xerxes, who had succeeded his father Darius, through Palestine again with his marauding armies. Whether Hebrews were drafted into the armies of the Persians we do not know, but we surmise that when taxes to the Persian government were regularly paid little else was expected of so insignificant a colony, and little notice was taken by the legal protectors of Palestine of her exposed condition and unavailing struggles after prosperity.

It is an interesting fact that in whatever country a group of Hebrews found a temporary home, some among them rose to places of power. In the Persian capital of Susa[2] was a Hebrew who held the important office of cupbearer to the king, possibly Artaxerxes I. An appeal to this man, Nehemiah,[3] presented by a group of his fellow-countrymen, who graphically pictured the needs of Jerusalem, met with sympathetic response. By permission of the king, with whom he was a favorite courtier, he organized an expedition to relieve Jerusalem. He carried with him his credentials as governor of the province of Judah, and papers which gave him the privilege of the royal forests for the selection of building materials. To follow step by step the task of this brave officer, at first welcomed by only the smaller and more devout party among the

[1] It is probable that the prophecy of Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament, was written in this period. It is concerned wholly with the religious condition of the Jewish community. It charges the people in general and the priests in particular with being careless and insolent toward Jehovah in their conduct of the temple worship and offerings (1:6—2:9) and with lacking all faith in his goodness and justice (2:17—3:14, 15). This is the reason why the community has not seen Jehovah's love manifested toward it more generously (1:2 ff.). But a day of judgment is at hand when Jehovah will destroy the wicked out of the community and exalt the righteous to a place of honor (4:1–3). Lest the work of destruction should be too wide-sweeping, Jehovah will send a prophet before the coming of the day of judgment whose preaching will bring about a change of heart among the wicked of the community.

[2] Locate Susa on the map.

[3] The story of Nehemiah is found in the book of that name, but this is a part of the chronicle to which the Book of Ezra belongs, and it is not easy to reconstruct the history from it.

A TYPICAL PERSIAN PALACE
A Restoration of the Palace of Artaxerxes Mnemon

citizens of Jerusalem but later recognized by all within the completed walls[1] as the champion of justice and fair dealing, would be a pleasant task, but we must recall that we are considering the prophets, and must leave other heroic lives for future study.

Back in Babylon devout Hebrews had learned that it was easier to obey a written law than a prophet's exhortations. At this time, as in the days preceding the reformation of Josiah, quiet preparation had been made to meet the necessity for a new revision of the laws. Priests and prophets in Babylon had been working diligently, and at last was produced a revision of the old laws with the addition of many new ones which would make provision for the new conceptions of Jehovah's holiness, and for the consequent necessity of purification of sinful man. At just what date the expedition, headed by a priest, Ezra, appeared, bearing this law from Babylon, we do not know, but this was the most important company which came from Babylon to Jerusalem. They were probably accompanied by Nehemiah who had returned to the Persian capital.[2] A long period of instruction and persuasion passed after the arrival of the expedition, before the people were ready to accept all the law. One of the first conditions of the purification of the nation was the putting-away of all the foreign wives who had been brought into the community by Hebrews who had been friendly with the neighboring peoples. But at last these were expelled, or the

[1] Nehemiah's first work was to organize the citizens of Jerusalem for the reconstruction of the ruined walls of the city. By constant supervision and rapid work each citizen being drafted into service for building or for defense, for a specific period, the walls were completed in fifty-two days after the work was commenced. The story of the difficulties encountered is recorded in the Book of Nehemiah, chaps. 1–7.

[2] The editor of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah has arranged his materials in such a way as to make it appear that Ezra was the first to leave Babylon for Jerusalem and that Nehemiah came at a later date. Facts which space does not permit to be cited here seem to show that Nehemiah was the pioneer instead of Ezra and that the editor's reason for transposing the two expeditions was the fact that he wished to give the honor of inaugurating this great reconstruction movement to Ezra, a priest, rather than to Nehemiah, a layman. One of the main purposes of the history contained in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, all of which were edited by the same man, was to bring out clearly and to glorify the work of the priesthood in Israel and the splendor of the services conducted by the priests in the great temple. Nehemiah's first trip to Jerusalem as governor was probably in 444 B.C., and his return after his visit to the Persian court was in 433 B.C.

families removed from Jerusalem, and at a great assembly of the people the law was formally accepted. Henceforth the people led by their priests measured their fitness for the coming of Jehovah by their obedience to the written law.[1]

The priest became the tutor of the people, and a passion for holiness seized upon the devout. This led to greater and greater rigidness in the observance of the ceremonials of worship. Practically every act of life became a religious act and was regulated by law. It is easy to see that many who had not taken to heart the spiritual lessons of the past would observe these laws as merely a formal matter, while to others they would furnish the means of expression of the deepest devotion to Jehovah, and a sincere desire to satisfy his requirements in holy living.

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[1] We should recall the former revision of the laws which appeared in the reign of Josiah and constituted the basis of the reformation. These laws are found in Deuteronomy. The newly revised code of Ezra's day is found chiefly in the Book of Leviticus. Its appropriateness to a religious community rather than a kingdom can easily be discovered, as also the longing for holiness which was a characteristic of the new life in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XV

VOICES OF HOPE

Were the prophets forever silenced by the new conditions in Jerusalem? As men having an authoritative place in the community perhaps, yes. Never again did they need to lift their voices against idolatry, for Israel had learned her lesson of the one true God. But since a religion of law is not always and for all its adherents a religion of the spirit, there were prophets unknown to us by name who found need as in earlier years to emphasize the necessity for honesty, justice, truth, sincerity, and mercy. Human nature had not changed under the new law. The rich still oppressed the poor. The sinner still thought that sacrifice would buy forgiveness from Jehovah. And still to the disheartened faithful the prophets needed to paint their pictures of the king and the kingdom of peace, in which Jehovah should dwell with his purified people and Jerusalem should rule the world, not by power but by her wisdom. Some of the most beautiful of these pictures follow:

The Prince of Peace[1]

[2]The people that are walking in darkness
See a great light:
They that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them doth the light shine.

Thou hast multipled the nation,
Thou hast increased their joy;
They joy before thee as men rejoice at the harvest time,
As men exult when they divide the spoil.

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[1] This poem pictures the wonderful ruler who shall bring in an era of prosperity and peace which shall never cease. Note that it is by wisdom and courage and the force of his own character rather than by military or political power that he is to establish his supremacy. Is this ideal of peace nearer realization today than when the prophet was speaking?

[2] Isa. 9:2–7.

For the yoke of his burden,
And the cross bar upon his shoulder,
The rod of his oppressor,
Thou hast broken as in the day of Midian.[1]

For all the armour of the warrior in the tumult,
And the garments drenched in blood,
Shall even be for burning,
As fuel for the flame.

For unto us a child is born,
Unto us a son is given;
And the government shall be upon his shoulder:
And his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor,
God of a Hero, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.[2]

Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end,
Upon the throne of David and throughout his kingdom,
To establish it, and to uphold it in justice and in righteousness
From henceforth even for ever.
The zeal of Jehovah of hosts shall bring this to pass.

Nature's Harmony[3]

[4]And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse,[5]
And a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit:
And the spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
A spirit of counsel and might,
A spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah.

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[1] *Day of Midian:* possibly referring to the victory of Gideon over the Midianites described in Judg., chaps. 6–8.

[2] *God of a Hero:* a god-like hero, greater than any which had yet appeared. *Eternal Father:* that is, in the sense of the Hebrew word for eternity, which means a very long time. The title designates one who will always be characterized by the quality of fatherly love.

[3] In this poem the peace which is to accompany the reign of the ideal king is represented as including even the animal kingdom, and all this is to be the result of the widespread knowledge of Jehovah.

[4] Isa. 11:1–9.

[5] *Jesse:* the name of the father of David, used to represent the house of David. The ideal king is always pictured as a descendant of David.

And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes,
Nor reprove according to the hearing of his ears:
But with righteousness shall he judge the poor,
And with equity the needy of the earth:
And he shall smite the oppressor with the rod of his mouth,
And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,
And faithfulness the band about his waist.
And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
And the calf and the young lion will graze together;
And a little child shall lead them.

And the cow and the bear shall be friends;
Their young ones shall lie down together:
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
And the babe shall play about the hole of the asp,
And the child shall put his hand on the viper's nest.

They shall not hurt nor destroy
In all my holy mountain:
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah,
As the waters cover the sea.

The Presence of Jehovah

[1]In that day[2] shall the branch of Jehovah be beautiful and glorious,
And the fruit of the land shall be perfect and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.
And it shall be, that he that is left in Zion,
Yea he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy,
Even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:
When the Lord shall have washed away the sin of the daughters of Zion,
And shall have cleansed the blood stains of Jerusalem from the midst thereof,
By the spirit of justice and by the spirit of burning.

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[1] Isa. 4:2–6.

[2] *In that day:* This phrase and others like it clearly suggest that the day of wonderful things is yet in the future when the prophet is speaking.

And Jehovah will come and he will create over the whole habitation of Mount Zion,
And over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day,
And the shining of a flaming fire by night:
For over all the glory shall be spread a canopy.
And there shall be a pavilion for a shadow in the daytime from the heat,
And for a refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain.[1]

A Song of Jehovah's Forgiveness[2]

[3]And in that day thou shalt say,
"I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord;
For though thou wast angry with me,
Thine anger is turned away,
And thou comfortedst me.

"Behold, God is my helper;
I will trust, and will not be afraid:
Jehovah is my strength and song;
And he is become my deliverer."

Therefore with joy shall ye draw water
Out of the wells of deliverance.
And in that day shall ye say,
"Give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon his name,
Make known his doings among the peoples,
Declare that his name is exalted.

"Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done wonderful things:
Let this be known through all the earth.
Cry aloud and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion:
For great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

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[1] "This new day is delayed in order that Jerusalem may become sufficiently holy to permit of Jehovah's coming to dwell with his people. The misfortunes which are in the midst of her are a part of the purifying process of Jehovah."

[2] The poet seeks to voice the spirit of thankfulness and joy which will pervade the community in that ideal future when Jehovah's forgiveness is complete and his presence in the community is constant and permanent.

[3] Isa: 12:1–6.

The Mountain of Jehovah

[1]In the latter days it shall come to pass,
That the mountain of Jehovah's house[2]
Shall be established on the top of the mountains
And it shall be exalted above the hills.[3]
All peoples shall flow unto it,
And many nations[4] shall go and say,
Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah
And to the house of the God of Jacob;
That he may teach us of his ways,
That we may walk in his paths.

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
And the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem;
And he will arbitrate between many peoples,
And will render decisions for strong nations afar off:

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning-hooks;[5]
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more.
But each man shall sit under his vine and under his fig-tree
And none shall make them afraid:
For the mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it.

In that day, saith Jehovah,
I will assemble that which is lame,
And I will gather that which is driven away,
And that which I have afflicted;
And I will make that which was lame a remnant;
And that which was cast far off a strong nation;
And Jehovah will reign over them
In mount Zion from henceforth even for ever.

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[1] Mic. 4: 1–4, 6, 7.

[2] *The mountain of Jehovah's house:* another phrase to indicate Jerusalem, conveying in itself the thought of exaltation.

[3] This does not mean that Jerusalem will be elevated physically above the surrounding hills, but rather that as the place honored by the presence of Jehovah's temple it will be renowned above all other spots. The language is boldly figurative.

[4] *Many nations:* "Jerusalem is to be the center of the world, where all peoples shall gather for instruction in religion and life."

[5] *Swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks:* because of no more war.

The New Creation[1]

[2]For, behold, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth:
And the former things shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.
But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create.
For, behold, I create Jerusalem exulting, and her people a joy.

And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and in my people.
No more shall be heard in her the voice of weeping, nor the sound of crying.
There shall no more go out from thence a young infant,
Nor an old man that hath not lived out his days:
For the child shall die an hundred years old.

And they shall build houses, and dwell in them;
And they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.
They shall not build, and another inhabit;
They shall not plant, and another eat:
For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people,
And my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labour in vain,
Nor bear children for calamity;
For they are the blessed of the Lord,
And their children with them.
And, before they call, I will answer;
And while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox:
And dust shall be the serpent's meat.
They shall not hurt nor destroy
In all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

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[1] A grand summing-up of the glories of the future. To appreciate fully the comforting nature of these wonderful songs of the prophets of these times, we must recall frequently the meager background of the struggling community in Jerusalem, the sordid questions of daily life, and the hopeless outlook for the future, so far as any political relationships of importance were concerned. Without these songs, and the faithful lives of those who penned them, we could hardly expect that the Jews would have succeeded in maintaining a separate existence. They must soon have been swallowed up by the surrounding nations, and their religion dissipated.

[2] Isa. 65:17–25.

CHAPTER XVI

JEHOVAH, THE GOD OF ALL MANKIND

Yet one other great message had the prophets and with this our studies will come to an end.[1] Was the old dream of Jerusalem as the one city of Jehovah a practical one? Was it not inevitable that the time should come when the prophets could see that if Jehovah had created all men he must be interested in all men, of whatever race, wherever they might be? The name of the prophet who added this last note to the wonderful conception of God, built up step by step by his predecessors, we do not know. It comes to us clothed in a series of stories, each a distinct parable, but clustered around the name of Jonah, one of the prophets of early Israel. Jonah is represented as a prophet entrusted by Jehovah with a message of warning to a wicked city, Nineveh. Jonah, with his narrow thought of Jehovah, thinks that by fleeing from Palestine he can escape him and his disagreeable task at the same time.

But we will let the prophet tell us his own story, and as we read let us think of Jonah as representing disobedient Israel of old, entrusted with a message from Jehovah to all the world, yet unfaithful to her mission, as Isaiah of Babylon had so graphically set forth.

[2]Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah[3] the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh,[4] that great city, and

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[1] To make a complete survey of the materials of prophecy, we should need to include in our study the books of Joel and Daniel, and Zech., chaps. 9–14. But these all belong to a later form of prophecy, which is separated from the earlier prophecy by such clearly marked characteristics as to constitute it a new kind of literature. To it the term "apocalyptic" is applied. Joel and Zech., chaps. 9–14, belong somewhere in the early part of the Greek period of Jewish history, which began with Alexander's conquest of the Orient in 333 B.C. Daniel was called forth by the life-and-death struggle waged on the part of the Jews at the time of the Maccabaean revolt, about 165 B.C.

[2] Jonah, chap. 1:1–17.

[3] *Jonah:* We do not know whether there is any special significance to be attached to the selection of the name of the prophet of Jeroboam's time as a type of the disobedient nation, since the only data which we have concerning his life are found in II Kings 14:25. If we recall the state of religion and politics in Jeroboam's reign we may well surmise that Jonah may have been associated in the mind of the prophets of a later day with worldly-mindedness and inability to understand Jehovah.

[4] *Nineveh:* Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, had long since been destroyed. It was a typical heathen city and was chosen by this prophet to represent the whole Gentile world.

cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa,[1] and found a ship going to Tarshish:[2] so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah.

But Jehovah sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was likely to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god; and they cast forth the wares[3] that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them. But Jonah was gone down into the hold of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy god,[4] if so be that that god will think upon us, that we perish not."[5] And they said every one to his fellow, "Come, and let us cast lots,[6] that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, "Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?" And he said unto them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land." Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, "What is this that thou hast done?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them.

Then said they unto him, "What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?" for the sea grew more and more tempestuous. And he said unto them, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that on my account this great tempest is upon you." Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get them

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[1] *Joppa:* a well-known port of Palestine, on the Mediterranean, directly west of ancient Shiloh. See map, opposite p. 31, unnamed seaport north of Philistia.

Tarshish: an ancient mercantile city of the Phoenicians in the south of Spain.

[3] *Wares:* merchandise. It was a galley ship, a merchant vessel.

[4] *Call upon thy god:* Jonah was the only man upon the ship who was not praying to his god for help in this peril.

[5] The shipmaster thinks that here may be the opportunity to call upon another god than those who seem deaf to their appeals.

[6] *Cast lots:* a common custom practiced in order to ascertain who was the cause of some special misfortune. See story of Jonathan (I Sam. 14:36–46).

back to the land; but they could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto Jehovah, and said, "We beseech thee, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee." So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared Jehovah exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice unto Jehovah and made vows.[1]

And Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the fish three days and three nights.

Thus the heathen sailors who had possibly never before heard of Jehovah put Jonah to shame by worshiping the God whom he sought to escape, and more significant still Jehovah the God of the Hebrews heard the cry of the sailors and delivered them from their danger, heathen though they were.

Will Jehovah our God hear the prayers of the heathen? This was the question of the thoughtful Hebrews in this period.

Meanwhile the life of Jonah, who had been cast into the sea, was saved. A great fish (was it typical of the nation of Babylonia?) swallowed him. Was this a picture of the captivity? The psalm through which Jonah voices the darkness of his prison is full of phrases which were common in the psalms written in the exile, or which recalled the nation's experience during that period.

[2]I called by reason of mine affliction unto Jehovah,
And he answered me;
Out of the depths of Sheol cried I,
And thou heardest my voice.
For thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas,
And the flood was round about me;
All thy waves and thy billows passed over me.
And I said, I am cast out from before thine eyes;
Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

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[1] *Made vows:* a religious ceremony. Vows were frequently made to cover a limited period of time, and might represent a great variety of acts. See vows of Jephthah, Judg., chap. 11; of Jacob, Gen. 28:20, 21, etc.

[2] Jonah 2:1–9.

The waters compassed me about, even to the soul;
The deep was round about me;
[1]The weeds were wrapped about my head.
I went down to the bottoms of the mountains;
The earth with its bars closed upon me for ever:
Yet hast thou brought up my life from the pit, O Jehovah my God.
When my soul fainted within me, I remembered Jehovah;
And my prayer came in unto thee, into thy holy temple.
I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay that which I have vowed.

When Jonah had learned his lesson of obedience he was cast forth and found himself in a place of safety.

A second opportunity is given the prophet to deliver his message of warning to the heathen city, the non-Hebrew world. Here again the experience of the sailors is repeated. The city repents, turns to Jehovah, and is saved. God changed for them as he had changed for Israel when Israel turned to him from the depths of the exile.

[2]And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, three days' journey across. And Jonah entered into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

And the people of Nineveh believed his warning; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.[3] And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, "Let

[1] If the reader will bear in mind the figurative character of the story he will not be troubled by the peculiarities of this description, in view of the supposed situation.

[2] Jonah 3:1–10.

[3] *Sackcloth, a fast, sat in ashes:* all signs of mourning. Sackcloth was a coarse cloth which irritated the skin and was worn especially as a symbol of repentance and self-punishment.

neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water; but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands.[1] Who knoweth whether God will not repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

The argument of the situation is made clear by the last chapter. Jonah does not understand. He maintains that he had from the start no confidence in Jehovah's promise to punish Nineveh and that was the reason for declining to deliver the message. Now his reputation as a prophet is ruined; he prays to die. Jehovah through a simple object-lesson teaches him the gospel of mercy and forgiveness.

[2]But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed unto Jehovah, and said, "I pray thee, O Jehovah, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Jehovah, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." And Jehovah said, "Art thou very angry?" Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth,[3] and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.

And Jehovah God prepared a gourd,[4] and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to deliver him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd. But God prepared a worm next day in the early morning, and it smote the gourd, so that it withered.

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[1] Note that cattle are represented as able to share in the miraculous change of heart of the city of Nineveh.

[2] Jonah 4:1–11.

[3] *Booth:* a shelter from the tropical sun.

[4] *Gourd:* A plant or vine common in tropical countries which grows to enormous size very rapidly, but not so rapidly as to render the story other than that of a miracle.

And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, so that he was faint, and requested that he might die, saying, "It is better for me to die than to live." And God said to Jonah, "Art thou very angry on account of the gourd?" And he said, "I am exceedingly angry, even unto death." And Jehovah said, "Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night; *and should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?*"

"More simply, as something quite self-evident, and therefore more sublimely and touchingly, the truth was never told in the Old Testament that God as creator of the whole earth must also be the God and Father of the entire world, in whose loving, kind, and fatherly heart all men are equal, before whom there is no difference of nation and confession, but only men whom he has created in his own image."

Shall not the God who made all men care for all men?

"Look unto me, and be ye saved,
All ye ends of the earth,
For I am God, and there is none else."

This seems a simple view of God to us who have so long accepted the thought of human brotherhood, and divine fatherhood. But few of us know or think of the long process by which the chains of ignorance and idolatry were shaken off and the idea of God, one, universal, all-powerful, all-loving, emerged from the darkness, took possession of the human heart, and fired the imagination of great souls the world over. Truth comes slowly, and the greater the truth the larger the preparation necessary.

Even at this point our chain is incomplete, for we have made no mention of the prophet of Nazareth, but our task like that of the Hebrew nation was to prepare the way for larger truth, whether from the lips of Hebrew or Gentile. We therefore leave our study here, content if those heroic men, whose names and a few of whose words and deeds these pages record, stand forth as living men with a message to humanity as well as to their own times and people.

To us as to men of old in our search for truth comes the assurance, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren. Unto him shall ye hearken." And how shall we recognize the prophets of our own day? Only by the test of time. Today as yesterday, and in all the past, he who would bring a message from God through science or art or literature, philosophy or religion must be content to wait for the passing years to testify to the truth of his words, but no true prophet will on this account be deterred from giving that message, no matter how difficult a task it may be.

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